TIRUVĀYMOḶI
ENGLISH GLOSSARY

VOLUME IV

by

(Jñāna Bhakti Bhūṣaṇa)

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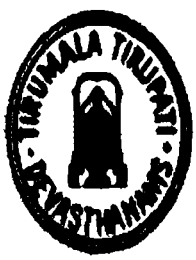

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

In this book, Devanagari characters as well as the Tamil alphabet have been transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the international body of orientalists and since then generally acknowledged as the only rational and satisfactory one, ruling out inconsistency, irregularity and redundancy of English spelling.

I. SANSKRIT (Devanagari) SCRIPT

अ a; आ ā; इ i; ई ī; उ u; ऊ ū; ऋ ṛ; ए e; ऐ ai; ओ o; औ ou; ं ṁ; ः ḥ; क् k; ख् kh; ग् g; घ् gh; ङ् ṅ; च् c. छ् ch; ज् j; झ् jh; ञ् ñ; ट् ṭ; ठ् ṭh; ड् ḍ; ढ् ḍh; ण् ṇ; त् t; थ् th; द् d; ध् dh; न् n; प् p; फ् ph; ब् b; भ् bh; म् m; य् y; र् r; ल् l; व् v; श् ś; ष् ṣ. स् s; ह् h;

क ka; का kā; कि ki; की kī; कु ku; कू kū; के ke; कै kai; को ko; कौ kou; कं k̇; कः kaḥ.
Likewise, for all other consonants.

Dot below ḥ gives the visarga (:), dot above ṁ gives the anusvara (ं) while the dot below ṇ gives the sound, as in 'gone'.

II. TAMIL SCRIPT

அ a; ஆ ā; இ i; ஈ ī; உ u; ஊ ū; எ e; ஏ ē; ஐ ai; ஒ o; ஓ ō; ஔ au; க் k; ங் ṅ; ச் c; ஞ் ñ; ட் ṭ; ண் ṇ; த் t; ந் n; ப் p; ம் m; ய் y; ர் r; ல் l; வ் v; ழ் ḷ; ள் ḻ; ற் ṟ; ன் ṉ; ஃ k̲; ஜ் j; ஷ் ś; ஸ் ṣ; ஸ் s; ஹ் h; க்ஷ் kṣ;

க ka; கா kā; கி ki; கீ kī; கு ku; கூ kū; கெ ke; கே kē; கை kai; கொ ko; கோ kō; கௌ kau; கஃ kaḥ.
Likewise, for all other consonants.

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BOOK IX

Ninth Centum—First Decad (IX-1)
(Koṇṭa peṇṭir)

Preamble

In the last decad (VIII-10), the Āḻvār had revealed to us the quintessence of his creed, namely, looking upon the Lord's devotees as his 'Be-all' and 'End-all', 'All-in-one', the sole means for attaining 'Mokṣa' (Salvation). The Saint is further elaborating it, in this decad, in a manner highly delectable to the devotees, in whom he has taken refuge. The superficial reader might think that this decad strikes a note different from that of the immediately preceding decad inasmuch as the Āḻvār now looks upon the Lord as the aggregate of all conceivable kinship, one can claim. There is, however, no incompatibility between these two decads, the current one being but an elaboration of the theme, set out in the last decad. Even as 'Bhagavad śeṣatva', that is, service unto the Lord culminates in 'Bhāgavata śeṣatva', that is, service unto His devotees, the latter, in its natural sequence, steps into the domain of the former. It is indeed a matter of common knowledge that our love to a specified individual extends up to all those intimately connected with him or her. Likewise, love unto the godly men is automatically carried over to all those closely associated with them and the love so generated reverts to the Lord, as the one loved and revered by the devotees. In Śloka 51 of 'Śrīguṇaratna Kośam' of Sri Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the illustrious author declares his love unto Lord Raṅganātha, as one stemming from his being the Spouse of Goddess Śrī Raṅga Nāyakī (Śrī Mahalaksmi). And then, reciprocally, the Upaniṣad reveals its predilection for the Divine Mother, in view of Her being the Consort of the Supreme Lord, the great Ordainer of the universe—'Asyeśānā Jagato Viṣṇupatnī'? Surely, there is no contradiction between these two versions, as they are mutually inclusive and not exclusive.

This decad copiously illustrates, in a telling manner, the utter futility of our hanging on to the earthly relations and all else except the Supreme Lord, Who alone is our Eternal Saviour and Sole Sustainer, under all circumstances. The miserable hollowness of the ephemeral bonds of the earthly relations and associates,

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the veritable parasites, is exposed in all its nakedness. Actually, this is but an elaboration of what the Āḻvār had already stated in V-1-8, wherein he pointed out that the Lord is the sum-total of all the happiness derived by the worldly men through glittering wealth, dazzling damsels, dutiful sons, doting parents and so on. It is this decad that set the pace for the great Piḷḷai Lokâcāryâ's theme that none but the Lord is our Protector, set out in aphorism 39 of Mumukṣuppaḍi and further elaborated by him, in his esoteric treatise, known as 'Prapanna Paṛtrâṇam'.

This decad is deemed to be in benedictive adoration of Mathurâ, in Uttara Pradesh, in view of the frequent reference, in this decad, to that holy centre.

koṇṭa peṇṭir, makkaḷ, uṟṟār, cuṟṟattavar, piṟarum
kaṇṭatōṭu paṭṭatu allāl, kātal maṟṟu yātum illai;
eṇ ticaiyum kīḻum, mēlum, muṟṟavum uṇṭa pirāṉ
toṇṭarōmāy uyyal allāl, illai kaṇṭīr-tuṇaiyē (IX–1–1)

Translation

Neither the wife by you acquired nor the sons unto you born
Nor your other relations and friends shall for you entertain
Love other than that rooted in lucre; lies indeed your salvation
In being the vassal of the Benefactor great, Who gulped down
Things, one and all, that lay in all the ten directions.

Notes

(i) Addressing the men of this world, the Saint impresses upon them that they need hardly deceive themselves by lavishing their misplaced affections on the earthly relations, who are not of real consequence and that they will do well to lean, instead, on the Supreme Lord, in view of the inviolable, eternal bond between them and Him. The Āḻvār does not mince matters and points out that one's wife and children are but goods purchased. So much of the man's heart twines round these goods that he would not mind turning his aged parents out, into the streets, in beggar's rags.

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Regarding the acquisition of a wife, the following story, related by an eminent discourser, is indeed very interesting and instructive :

A brahmin youth ran about here and there, begging for money with which he could buy a wife. In the course of his wanderings, he reached a big city, where, unfortunately, he fell seriously ill. He had, no doubt, collected a few hundreds of rupees which served to boost up his hopes of soon getting a lady to his side. But the sickness gained ground and the poor fellow was on his death-bed, writhing in agony. When the sympathetic neighbours gathered round him and enquired of him what ailed him, he cried out: "What a pity! I have not been blessed with a beautiful young woman, draped in finery, standing by my pillow and cooling my burning brow with her sweet tears, at this dying moment."

(ii) That the Lord is our Eternal Relation and unfailing Protector is brought out by the manner in which He sustained, unasked and unsolicited, all things and beings, in His stomach, during the Deluge, so that they may not be swept off by the terrific waters. Our salvation, sure and certain, therefore, lies in the recognition of our essential nature, namely, being at the sole disposal of the Supreme Lord, as His exclusive vassal.

tuṇaiyum cārvum ākuvārpōl, cuṟṟattavar piṟarum
aṇaiya vanta ākkam uṇṭēl, aṭṭaikaḷpōl cuvaippar;
kaṇai oṉṟālē ĕḷ maramum eyta em kār mukilaip
puṇai eṉṟu uyyap pōkal allāl, illai kaṇṭīr-poruḷē. (IX–1–2)

Translation

The earthly kinsmen and others are after your money and yet pretend
To be your benefactors, safe and sincere, and you they befriend
Only to suck you out like leeches as long as they choose;
Better take refuge in our cloud-hued Lord, Who did pierce

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With but a single shaft the trees seven; ' tis no use,
Take note, pinning your faith on others.

Notes

(i) (The earthly relations flock, in strength, to those enjoying wealth and opulence, just to grab whatever they can. These are veritable parasites, putting on the garb of well-wishers and benefactors and are least dependable. On the other hand, the Lord succours even those who are sceptical and entertain doubts about His strength and dispensation. Sugṛiva's attitude towards Lord Rāma, even after He had promised to relieve the distress of the former by slaying Vali, the powerful monkey king, is the pointer Sugṛiva's doubts about Śrī Rāma's ability to vanquish the formidable Vāli were dispelled only after He ably demonstrated His strength and skill by (1) Kicking off, to an enormous distance, the skeleton of Dundubi, the Rākṣasa, slain by Vāli, after a long and grim struggle and (2) sending a powerful shaft which pierced the Seven *Sāl* trees and the seven worlds beyond and ultimately returned to the Lord's quiver, as proof-positive of His enormous strength, more than a match indeed for Vāli, despite the latter's colossal strength. It should also be noted that the Lord seeks nothing in return, like unto the benevolent rain-clouds unleashing water all over. Therefore it is, He is referred to here, as the cloud-hued.

(ii) Again, look at the multifarious ways in which Lord Kṛṣṇa stood beside the Paṇḍavas and Droupati, through thick and thin and protected them at every turn. The lesson to be learnt, from all these, is that the Lord is our sole support and leaning on Him is always productive of immense good while dependence on others can only breed miseries.

poruḷ kai uṇṭāyc cellakkāṇil, pōṛṛi eṉṛu ēṛṛu eḻuvar;
iruḷkoḷ tuṉpattu iṉmai kāṇil, eṉṉē! eṉpārum illai;
maruḷkoḷ ceykai acurar maṅka, vaṭamaturaip piṛantāṛku
aruḷkoḷ āḻāy uyyal allāl, illai kaṇṭīr-araṇē. (IX–1–3)

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Translation

When men behold money in your hands, you they hail and court
And secure one thing or the other ere from you they depart;
However, none in pity will unto you come
When chill penury casts on you its terrific gloom;
There's indeed no other way for your salvation
Except the grace of the Lord Who, in North Maturai, was born
To quell the Asuras, who did on all inflict pain.

Notes

(i) The worldly men are essentially selfish and they befriend only those who possess money and lavish praises on them. The latter easily succumb to these sycophants and are misled into believing that they are all genuine well-wishers, with no personal ends in view. The confidence-tricksters will then have no hesitation in fleecing the wealthy men, cheating them, right and left, all the time, and deserting them altogether, once their money is drained off.

(ii) It is with supercilious disdain that the world looks on poverty. Piḷḷai Tirunaraiyūr Araiyar used to relate thus: A man grew rich with the help of a friend who, however, became poor in the process. The latter invited the former for dinner, on a certain occasion. The rich man would not, however, condescend to respond nor even care to enquire of the welfare of the poor man, lest, by doing so, he might (1) suffer in the estimation of the world, as having kinship with a poor man and (2) let the poor man rise in the estimation of the world, as one favoured by a rich friend. In dire contrast to this, the supreme Lord readily responds to the call of the destitute. All that one needs to do is to invoke His redemptive grace and not to shrink away from it, as and when it descends. It is, therefore, no use hankering after lesser persons, for protection; by doing so, one would be asking for trouble, like unto the

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little babe wanting to touch fire, mistaking it for a red seed (used for weighment of Gold).

araṇam ávar aṟṟa kālaikku eṉṟu eṉṟu amaikkappaṭṭār
iraṇam koṇṭa teppar ávar; iṉṟiyiṭṭāḻum aṯtē;
varuṇittu eṉṉē! vaṭamaturaip piṟantavaṉ vaṇ pukaḻē
caraṇ eṉṟu uyyap pōkal allāl, illai kaṇṭīr-catirē. (IX–1–4)

Translation

The men we court and pamper, after reflection deep,
As our certain saviours, in times of dire need,
Are helpless themselves and will thus betray us indeed;
'Tis no use talking about these ungratefuls, we will do well instead,
To turn our thougpts on the glory great of the One,
In North Maturai born, for our salvation lies therein alone.

Notes

(i) Even those, who are currently well off, apprehend the possibility of lean days overtaking them and, therefore, lean, right from now, on some one in whom they have great confidence. But that very person, looked upon as their prospective saviour and pampered heavily, miserably lets them down, at the crucial moment. In Taittiṟaya Samhita, First Kāṇḍa, fifth praśna, it is said that, in an encounter with the Asuras, the Devas once attained victory. Apprehending, however, the probability of their suffering defeat, in their next encounter with the Asuras, the Devas deposited with 'Agni' (Fire-God) their choicest wealth, as a stand-by, to fall back upon, during those dark days of defeat. The Fire-God, however, appropriated all that wealth unto himself and deserted them. Actually, those persons who are chosen as our prospective guardians and unto whom we entrust all our precious hoardings, knock them off, as if it was but a repayment of the debt we owed them earlier. Even assuming that the person, in whom we pin such a robust faith, is one of great integrity and, therefore, highly dependable, it is just

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possible that he suddenly passes away and leaves us in the lurch, at the crucial moment, dreaded by us so much.

(ii) Did not Śrī Rāma chide Lakṣmaṇa that the latter would do well to recount Bharata's greatness, any length of time, much to his (Rāma's) delectation but desist from indulging in a tirade against Kaikeyi? Even so, the Āḻvār says that we will do well to meditate on the great qualities of the Lord, instead of wasting our breath in denouncing the ungrateful men of the world. There is no greater good than such sweet contemplation of the Lord, who bestows on us, the eternal reward of Heaven for the mere submission of ours to Him, "I belong to You, I am Yours". On the other hand, the result achieved by hanging on to others will hardly be commensurate with the effort put in by the supplicant.

caturaṃ eṉṟu tammait tāmē cammatittu, iṉmoḻiyār
maturapōkam tuṟṟavarē vaiki, maṟṟu oṉṟu uṟuvar;
atirkoḷ ceykai acurar maṅka, vaṭamaturaip piṟantāṟku
etirkoḷ āḻāy uyyal allāl, illai kaṇṭir-iṉṟamē. (IX–1–5)

Translation

Alas! they that did of their ability boast and revel
In dalliance with the sweet-tongued damsels,
Will some time be by them put to shame and ridicule;
There's no greater bliss indeed than being the loving vassal
Of the Lord Who, in North Maturai, was born to quell
The fell Asuras who did perpetrate deeds abominable.

Notes

(i) With their youthful vigour and wealth drained off, the erstwhile heroes, the dynamic centre of attraction for the voluptuous women of rare beauty, fade out miserably. And yet, these men try, in vain, to trade on their past reputation and are beaten back and unrelentingly repelled by those very women on whom they had lavished their love and lucre. The necessity for alluding to the inconstancy of these base women arises from the fact

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that, in this decad, the Āḻvār not only impresses the need for our giving up dependence on all our earthly relations and clinging to the Lord instead, but also brings home the grim truth that the world is steeped in ingratitude and is thus prone to spurn the erstwhile donors and benefactors. All these lead to the logical compulsion of our pinning our faith solely in Him, Who will stand by us, under all circumstances and salve us. The bliss, derived from God-love, is not only far superior to that sought in the company of the fair ladies but also everlasting.

(ii) As Nampiḷḷai puts it, all that we have to do to win the love of God is not to repel the influx of His sweet grace, as and when it descends on us. On hearing that Śri Kṛṣṇa would be visiting Hastinapur shortly, as an emissary of the Pāṇḍavas, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra did some loud thinking, as follows: "Kṛṣṇa, the partisan of the Pāṇḍavas will be going over here shortly, to mediate on their behalf. Let us try to square him up, by giving him land and gold." The pious Sañjaya, however, cut to size the hapless old king and disabused him of his wrong notions about Lord Kṛṣṇa, by saying: "All that Kṛṣṇa would need and care for is the simple courtesy normally extended to an ordinary sojourner, namely, cool water for washing the weary feet and kind words of enquiry. Anything else, you might like to offer Him, should be out of an innate love for Him and not by way of winning Him over; in the latter case, He would just spurn it all".

(iii) The so-called earthly pleasures are always tinged with sorrow, like unto a man right on the gallows, about to be hanged, quenching his thirst and feeling satisfied or like shelter from the gruelling heat of the Sun, in the shade cast by the outstretched hood of an infuriated cobra. On the other hand, the bliss enjoyed, in the service of the Supreme Lord, is unalloyed, an end in itself, fraught with felicity.

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illai kaṇṭīr ippam; antō! uḷḷatu niṉaiyātē,
tollaiyārkaḷ ettaṉaivar tōṟṟik kaḻintoḻintār!
mallai mūtūr vaṭamaturaip piṟantavaṉ vaṇ pukaḻē
colli uyyap pōkal allāl, maṟṟoṉṟu illai-curukkē. (IX–1–6)

Translation

Many men of yore had just come and gone,
Oblivious of the true goal eternal, alas! happiness there's none,
In this world, take note; lies indeed our salvation
In singing the glory great of the Lord, Who was born
In North Maturai, rich and hoary; this is the truth plain,
Which, in no other way, one can explain.

Notes

The Āḻvār deplores the fate of myriads of men who have come into this world and passed out, without realising the eternal values of life and the everlasting happiness resulting therefrom. What a pity! these men failed to discover that there is no real happiness over here and that the Supreme Lord alone can bestow real and lasting happiness through our loving and intimate service unto Him.

The Saint, therefore, exhorts the men of the contemporary world not to follow in the footsteps of those men of the past and get bogged down, but attain salvation by singing the great glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa who was born in North Mathura–the holy city, hallowed by the advent of Lord Vāmana and Lord Kṛṣṇa and by virtue of its having been the capital of Śatrugna, the Youngest brother of Śrī Rāma.

maṟṟoṉṟu illai; curuṅkac coṉṉōm; mā nilattu ev uyirkkum
ciṟṟa vēṇṭā; cintippē amaiyum kaṇṭīrkaḷ; antō!
kuṟṟam aṉṟu; eṅkaḷ peṟṟat tāyaṉ, vaṭamaturaip piṟantāṉ
kuṟṟam il cīr kaṟṟu, vaikaḷ vāḻtal kaṇṭīr-kuṇamē. (IX–1–7)

Translation

Let me, in brief, tell ye, men of this sprawling world!
There's no means for your salvation except to learn and abide
In contemplation of the flawless traits of Kṛṣṇa, our Lord,

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Who, in North Maturai, was born; 'tis indeed meritorious
And would suffice, no need there is for practices, tiresome and tedious.

Notes

The Āḻvār now expounds the easy worshippability of the Lord and the sweetness that flows from worshipping Him. All those, in this abode of ours, surrounded by the oceanic waters, are eligible to partake of the Āḻvār's advice and reap the rich reward. The importance of looking upon the Lord as the 'Ready Means' (siddhopāya), the Means and the End combined, is being emphasised here, when the Āḻvār asks the people to desist from any other path of discipline, entailing tedious ritualistic observances. As true knowledge of the inter-relation between Man and God will, by itself, lead to salvation (Jñānān Mokṣaḥ), mere mental awareness of the Lord's role as our sole Benefactor, with an inherent obligation to protect His feeble subjects at this end, will suffice. But then, it might be asked whether it would be faulty, rather superfluous, to sing the Lord's glory, as enjoined in this song. No, it is not at all faulty insofar as this laudation is an end in itself and not done as a means for attaining Him, in a spirit of bargaining.

The Saint exhorts the temporal beings to do nothing more than recite the Lord's names, which calls for no special effort, entailing fatigue. It may be recalled, in this context, how that great God-lover, Prahlāda invited his school-mates to ejaculate God's names effortlessly, as follows:

"Oh, Lord Supreme," by morn, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa,", at noon and "Oh, Govindā,", in the evening.

vāḻtal kaṇṭīr kuṇam itu; antō! māyavaṉ aṭi paravip
pōḻtu pōka uḷḷakiṟkum puṇmai ilātavarkku
vāḻ tuṇaiyā vaṭamaturaip piṟantavaṉ vaṇ pukaḻē
vīḻ tuṇaiyāp pōm itaṉil yātum illai-mikkatē. (IX–1–8)

Translation

Alas! how ignorant of the art of living are men indeed!
No greater felicity there is unto the blemishless ones that think

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Of living, in the real sense, than lovingly meditate and sing
The glory great of the One, born in North Maturai, the wondrous Lord.

Notes

* (i) This is one of the several stanzas of the ' Divya Prabandhas' that lend support to Saint Rāmānuja's elucidation, in the 'Antarādhikaraṇa ' of his Śrī Bhāṣya, of the main purpose of the Lord's incarnations. Although the triple functions of succouring the Saintly, vanquishing the wicked and re-establishment of the moral order of things could have as well been achieved by the mere ' Saṅkalpa ' (resolve) of the Omnipotent Lord, the first part, namely, protection of the pious ones couldn't have been put through effectively, except by the Lord's actual descent into their midst. The great qualities of head and heart, freely displayed by the Lord during His Avatārs, sustain the Godly men down the ages, immersed in the sweet contemplation thereof, long after the Avatār was concluded and the Lord returned to the Celestium. This, in essence, is what ' Sādhu paritrāṇam ' (protection of the pious ones) does connote. The age-long sins of appalling magnitude can get liquidated only through the contemplation of the Lord's auspicious traits and wondrous deeds.

(ii) The great Nampiḷḷai puts it that the Āḻvār deplores the callous indifference of the worldly men whom he has to invite, rather beg, to drink deep of the great delicacy that the Lord is, like unto hiring out people to come and taste the sweet sugarcane.

(iii) " The blemishless ones ", mentioned in this song, are those who abide in the Lord, all the time, reading and writing about Him, listening to the pious ones and talking to them, resulting in mutual enlightenment and entertainment. This is in contradistinction to the [illegible] enjoy the reading, writing and talking about the Lord's [illegible] glory, as a means for eking out the material existence in luxurious style, literally pawning away God for the

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enjoyment of worldly pleasures and earning their livelihood, as Parāśara Bhaṭṭārya would say.

yātum illai mikku ataṉil eṉṟu eṉṟu, atu karuti,
kātu ceyvāṉ kūṭaiceytu kaṭaimuṟai vāḻkkaiyum pōm;
mā tukiliṉ koṭikkoḷ māṭa vaṭamaturaip piṟanta
tātu cēr tōḷ kaṇṇaṉ allāl, illai kaṇṭīr-caraṇē. (IX–1–9)

Translation

Things mundane, one might deem quite often,
As the goal supreme, but alas! it would dwindle down,
Like unto earlobes, disfigured with holes wide open,
By those seeking to decorate them; haven there's none
But Kaṇṇaṉ, whose shoulders are bedecked with garlands fine,
Who, in North Maturai, with banners atop the castles, was born.

Notes

(i) The Saint warns those seeking protection in any one other than the Supreme Lord, that they are in for deterioration, instead of going up the scale and that they would, in the bargain, get dislodged even from the old order of things. These men will, therefore, do well to seek refuge in the Supreme Lord, the unfailing Protector. This position is brought home vividly by citing the example of those, with charming ear-lobes, disfiguring them in the name of decorating themselves with gold ear-rings by piercing therein elongated holes. In his unique diction, Nampiḷḷai , the great glossator, puts it that even the so-called enjoyment of family life, bristling with progeny and the resultant din and tussle, will decline, when people seek the protection of any other than the Supreme Lord who, as Lord Kṛṣṇa, was born in North Mathura; they will thus be in an unenviable position, neither here nor there.

(ii) Yet another interpretation of this song, given in the commentary of Tirukkurukaippirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ, is as follows : Those that endeavour to attain 'Kaivalya mokṣa' (i.e.) enjoyment of the Self, in its disembodied

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state, freed from the cycle of birth and death, treating it as the Supreme goal, instead of God-enjoyment, stand to lose even the little enjoyment they had in family life. The analogy of disfiguring the ear-lobes, in the name of decorating them, holds good here also.

kaṇṇaṉ allāl, illai kaṇṭīr caraṇ; atu niṟka, vantu
maṇṇiṉ pāram nīkkutaṟkē, vaṭamaturaip piṟantāṉ
tiṇṇamā num uṭaimai uṇṭēl, avaṉ aṭi cērttu uymmiṉō;
eṇṇa vēṇṭā; nummatu ātum avaṉ aṉṟi-maṟṟu illaiyē.
(IX–1–10)

Translation

The Lord was in North Maturai born as Kaṇṇaṉ
To establish the truth that none but He is our haven sure
And to rid Mother Earth of her terrific burden;
You and what yours you deem, at His feet do offer
And salvation attain; there's no need to waver,
For there's hardly a thing that unto Him doesn't belong.

Notes

(1) The Gita Śloka, "Paritrāṇāya Sādhūnām....." has been interpreted by our Ācāryas differently, at different places, but it should not be misconstrued that they are at variance with one another. Actually, these are the different facets of the central theme, namely, the Lord is the 'Ready Means' (Siddhopāya) around whom revolves the triple functions of His Avatāras, namely, *Sustenance of the Righteous*, *suppression of the unrighteous* and *stabilisation of the moral order of things*. Saint Rāmānuja has held that the sole purpose of the Lord's advent on Earth is to succour the 'Sādhus' (Godly men), relegating the other two components to a secondary place, as they could as well be achieved by the Lord's mere resolve, thus dispensing with the need for His incarnation. But then, there is an aphorism in 'Śrīvaçana Bhūṣaṇam' which quotes Nañcīyar, as attributing the herculean tasks performed by the Lord during His Avatāras to His intolerance of the insults by the wicked ones on His devotees. In the eighth song of this very decad, 'Sādhu paritrāṇam' was

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emphasised as the main purpose of the Lord's Avatāras. In this song, however, ridding the Earth of its unwholesome burden (destroying the wicked) has been adduced as the purpose of the Lord's advent as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This brings into focus the aspect of extinction of the wicked ones. Actually, this aspect is but a natural corollary to 'Sādhu paritrāṇam', which comprises both the fulfilment of the thing, wished for, and elimination of the obnoxious. Further, the third aspect of the Avatāra is re-establishment of the moral order of things, which had declined alarmingly, prior to the Lord's advent. But the Lord, Whose purpose it was to resuscitate 'Dharma' and put it back on stable footing, did call upon Arjuna to give up altogether the pursuit of Dharma (Gita XVIII-66). This adds a new dimesnion to the Lord's purpose of setting up 'Dharma'. What He is after is to make us pin all our faith in Him, the 'Siddha Dharma', 'Kṛṣṇam dharmaṃ sanātanam', 'Rāmo Vigrahavān dharmaḥ'.

(ii) There's no need to waver, in regard to the submission unto the Lord of yourself and your so-called possessions, whether a particular thing belongs to you or to Him. There is hardly a thing which does not vest in Him, which you can call your own.

ātum illai maṟṟu avaṉil eṉṟu, atuvē tuṇintu,
tātu cēr tōḷ kaṇṇaṉaik kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ ccoṉṉa
tīṯtu ilāta oṉ tamiḻkaḷ ivai āyirattuḷ ip paṯṯum
ōta valla pirākkaḷ nammai āḷuṭaiyāṉkaḷ paṇṭē. (IX–1–11)

Translation

The benefactors great, well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the impeccable thousand, in chaste Tamil, of Caṭakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, Who did his unflinching faith pin
Solely on Lord Kaṇṇaṉ, with garland bedecked,
Are unto him and others of his ilk Masters, since long back.

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Notes

(i) The great ones, who learn and chant this decad, are said to attract unto them, as their vassals, the Lord's devotees like the Āḻvār, right from the moment these chanters acquired the physical frames which eventually led them on to the study and recital of this decad.

(ii) It is the Āḻvār's firm faith in the Supreme Lord, as the 'Means' and the 'End', that manifasted itself as this decad, where he declares that Lord Kṛṣṇa is all. This robust faith in Him was, in turn, induced by the Lord's exquisite Form, His sinewy shoulders sporting the lovely tuḻaci garland.

(iii) The impeccability of this hymnal has already been stressed upon, in several places. Unlike Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, which introduce several extraneous matters as well, Tiruvāymoḻi dwells exclusively on the Supreme Lord.

Ninth Centum—Second Decad (IX-2)
(Paṇṭai nāḷālē)

Preamble

The inviolable and eternal bond between us and the Supreme Lord, Who combines in Him the different facets of earthly relationship known to us, was stressed upon in the last decad, incidentally throwing overboard our so-called relationship with all the rest. The Upaniṣads proclaim that the Lord is "All-in-one', "*Mātā Pitā, Brātā, Nivāsaś Śaraṇam Suhrut gathir Nārāyaṇa*". Actually, He stays in His 'Arca' (iconic) Form, in the pilgrim centre known as Tiruppuḻiṅkuṭi, only to extend to His votaries all the benefits which they could expect from their earthly relations, mother, father, brother etc.

Therefore it is, the Āḻvār now proceeds (mentally ofcourse) to that holy centre, eager to become the recipient of the Lord's love and attention, the aggregate of all that the numerous relations could bestow. But then, the Lord remained unresponsive, without so

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much as casting on the Āḻvār His sweet glances, uttering kind words of enquiry and so on. This did not, however, detract from the Āḻvār's immense faith in Him, as his all. He could certainly await, with all that robust confidence, the descent of the Lord's grace, the bestowal on him of the Lord's caressing love and attention, if not the same day, the next day or the day after. But what agitated the Āḻvār's mind, meanwhile, was the manner in which the Lord was reclining in the holy centre, without changing even once, by way of readjustment, the posture assumed by Him right at the start, a very difficult thing indeed! As a matter of fact, the Āḻvār had already echoed his anxiety, rather uneasiness, in this regard, in VIII-3-5 and this is but a follow-up. The Āḻvār, closetted with the Lord in the shrine, would now plead with the Lord privately that He should deign to move about, come forward a few paces in the company of His Divine consorts, greet him with His bewitching smiles and so on. The Āḻvār is thus seeking, in this decad, the benefits accruing from the attainment of the Lord, the final goal, lauded by him, in the preceding decad.

Meaning apart, the diction of this decad is such as to melt even stony hearts. Those of us, who get caught up in the bewildering complexities of family life, will do well to chant this decad and feel relieved and refreshed. How soothing are these verses indeed!

paṇṭai nāḷālē, niṉ tiru-aruḷum
paṅkayattāḷ tiru-aruḷum
koṇṭu, niṉ kōyil cīyttu, palpaṭikāl
kuṭikuṭi vaḻivantu, āṭceyyum
toṇṭarōrkku aruḷi, cōti vāy tiṟantu,
uṉ tāmaraik kaṇkaḷāḷ nōkkāy-—
teṉ tiraip porunal taṉ paṇai cūḻnta
tiruppuḷiṅkuṭikkiṭantāṉē! (IX–2–1)

Translation

Oh, Lord, reclining in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi whose fields fertile are fed
By the limpid waters of 'Porunal', may You Your grace shed
On us, by you and (Lakṣmi) the lotus-born, duly blest
To serve, generation after generation, in Your vicinity sweet,
And utter from Your radiant lips words nice,
Casting glances sweet from Your lotus eyes.

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Notes

(i) The Āḻvār, who seeks refuge in none but the Lord, beseeches Him to quench his God-thirst by addressing nice words unto him and cast His sweet glances on him. While making this prayer, the Saint gratefully acknowledges the influx of the combined grace of the Divine Couple on him, through successive generations, unremittingly engaged in Divine Service. Actually, in strict chronological sequence, it was the benevolent grace of the Divine Mother that was first shed on the Āḻvār, which, in turn, led to the bestowal on him of the Lord's grace, as well. It is by dint of such grace that the votaries render the appropriate kinds of service in the temples at holy-pilgrim centres. Of the various kinds of service one can render, sweeping and cleansing the temple premises, ensuring their tidiness, secure the pride of place. Even Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkai Āṇṭāṉ, about whom there is a striking anecdote, in the esoteric treatise known as 'Śrīvacana Bhūṣaṇam', who had given up all bodily activities, presisted in rendering such service. He had, no doubt, entrusted himself to the Lord's sole keeping and yet, he deemed cleaning the temple premises as an end in itself, for the simple reason that one can easily perceive the difference between an area already cleaned and one yet to be cleaned, purely from an aesthetic point of view.

(ii) *Glances from the Lord's lotus eyes*: When Piḷḷai Tevap-perumāḷ Arayar, the temple bard, sang this song in the august assembly in front of Lord Raṅganātha, he went on repeating the phrase, "Turn on me the glances sweet from your lotus eyes". Pat came the admonition from his father, Āḻvār Tiruvaraṅka Perumāḷ Arayar, as follows: "Why do you, my son, plague the Lord with such plaintive appeals? Has He not blessed you with a sweet voice to chant the sweet canticles of the Āḻvārs? Has He not also bestowed on you enough, by way of riches and children? What more do you

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want from the Lord so as to pester Him with such meltingly plaintive appeals? Go ahead with your recital".

kuṭikkiṭantu, ākkam ceytu, niṉ tīrtta
aṭimaik kuṟṟēvalceytu, uṉ poṉ
aṭik kaṭavātē, vaḻi varukiṉṟa
aṭiyarōrkku aruḷi, nī orumāḷ
paṭikku aḷavāka nimirtta niṉ pāta—
paṅkayamē talaikku aṇiyāy—
koṭikkoḷ poṉ matiḷ cūḻ, kuḷir vayal colai,
tiruppuḷiṅkuṭik kiṭantāṉē! (IX–2–2)

Translation

May You, Oh Lord! reposing in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi whose golden walls
Are with creepers adorned alongside fields and gardens cool,
Shed your grace on us, your vassals from generations, by You blest
To cling to Your lovely feet and render service steadfast,
And may You my head decorate with Your lotus feet,
Which did once suitably expand and span all the worlds.

Notes

(i) While praying unto the Lord at Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi that He be pleased to place His lotus feet, the safe and easy refuge of one and all, on his head, the Āḻvār expatiates on his steadfast servanthood (śeśatva), which lends itself to four components, namely, strict adherence to the traditional creed of exclusive service unto the Lord and His devotees, enhancing the family name by enriching the tradition through rare conduct without precedent, rendering service unto the Lord with single-minded devotion, untainted by worldly pursuits and unflinching subservience to the Lord's will, as distinguished from service rendered at one's own sweet will. In regard to these components of servanthood, the illustrious author of 'Ācārya Hṛdayam' puts the Āḻvār on a par with

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Bharata. When sage Vaśiṣṭa and the council of Ministers of King Daśaratha wanted to make Bharata, the king, in place of Śrī Rāma sent into exile, Bharata would not agree to it, on the ground that it would mark a daring departure from the established tradition of the Ikṣvāku dynasty whereby only the eldest son wore the crown. It is this traditional sanctity that the Āḻvār also emphasises in this song.

(ii) Indeed, Bharata added lustre to the traditional glory by leading the austere life of an ascetic during Rāma's exile, lying on a bare floor and getting his body smeared with mud and so on. Likewise, saint Nāmmalvār stood with eyes dried and parched-up lips, bailed out, with his palms the torrential tears from his eyes and fell down on the floor, fainting with grief, during those moments of extreme desolation, when the Lord did not favour him with His vision.

(iii) No doubt, both Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata served Śrī Rāma and yet, there was a fundamental difference between them. Whereas Lakṣmaṇa would insist that he shall follow Śrī Rāma into exile and serve Him, in every conceivable manner, Bharata's stance was one of total subservience to Śrī Rāma's sovereign will. Although his mission of getting Sri Rama, back home from exile, did not succeed, yet Bharata was happy that he could at least get the Lord's pair of sandals, as His Regent, to be installed on the throne during His absence from Ayodhya. The Āḻvār claims that he is also made of the same stuff as Bharata and is, therefore entitled to the Lord's grace. The Āḻvār also invokes the Lord's pair of feet which, in fact, had been set by Him on one and all, without distinction of high and low, during His Avatāra as the sprawling Tṛvikrama.

(iv) As regards the description, in this song, of the pilgrim centre, as one enclosed by scintillating walls adjoining fertile fields and cool gardens, there is a juicy interpretation from Nampiḷḷai, which none but one of his gigantic intellect could conceive. The grief of Sītā, in captivity,

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was two-fold, namely, (i) melancholy due to her misgivings about Śrī Rāma's intention in regard to redeeming her, in view of the enormous lapse of time and (ii) dejection due to separation from her Lord. The first vanished on her meeting Hanumān. So also, the Āḻvār's dejection falls into two distinct compartments, namely, (i) apprehension of the possibility of anything untoward happening to the Lord reclining in this land of dark nescience and (ii) inability to mingle with the Lord to his heart's fill. The first part of the Āḻvār's disquietitude gets eliminated by the stately walls enclosing the holy place and what remains is the second for allaying which the Āḻvār makes the prayer, as in the third line of this song.

kitanta nāḷ kiṭantāy; ettaṉai kālam
kiṭattu, uṉ tiruuṭampu acaiya!
toṭarntu kuṟṟēval ceytu tol aṭimai
vaḻi varum toṇṭarōrkku aruḷi,
taṭam koḷ tāmaraik kaṇ viḻittu, nī eḻuntu, uṉ
tāmarai maṅkaiyum nīyum,
iṭam koḷ mūvulakum toḻa, iruntaruḷāy-
tiruppuḷiṅkuṭik kiṭantāṉē! (IX–2–3)

Translation

How is it, my Lord! You do in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi repose
In one and the same posture ever since You came there,
Not minding the pain on Your body exquisite? how long more
Will You in this manner lie? May You shed Your grace
On us, grown gray in Your service hoary and turn on us
Your lotus eyes large; may You with Your lotus-born Spouse
Remain seated so as to be adored by the three worlds spacious!

Notes

(i) Having set out, in the two preceding songs, his descent from a lineage of devout men engaged unremittingly in the self-less service of the Lord, the Āḻvār now prays unto Him to concede his wish, as follows: The Lord should rise up and turn His sweet glances on him, be

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seated along with Mahālakṣmi, so as to take service from him and be incidentally worshipped by the denizens of all the three worlds. It is, no doubt, a matter well within the knowledge of the Āḻvār that the Lord, in His Iconic Form, remains, for all intents and purposes, static, without altering the posture, initially assumed by Him. And yet, the Āḻvār would want the Lord to get up, be seated and so on. Actually, his predecessor Tirumaḻicai Āḻvār had similarly entreated Lord Arāvamutaṉ, enshrined in Tirukkuṭantai (Kumbakonam, in Tamil Nāḍu) to get up and address a few words to him. However, when, in response, the Lord rose from bed a little, the Āḻvār would not be a party to the Lord disturbing Himself from His much-needed rest and therefore, requested Him to speak without getting up. The Lord is seen there, down to this day, in a posture midway between lying and sitting.

(ii) The Āḻvār would appear to have been thinking on these lines: "It is just possible that the Lord in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi assumed the lying posture, in response to the request of an ardent devotee. And now, the Āḻvār finds that the Lord has been lying in the same posture far too long, much to His discomfort, and very much wishes that He should certainly readjust the posture, so as to secure physical relief, the more so, when a request to this effect is made by a devotee of his calibre." Did not Āṇṭāḷ and her confreres request Lord Kṛṣṇa to get up from bed and walk down to the drawing room to grant them audience, duly seated on the throne?

puḷiṅkuṭik kiṭantu, varakuṇamaṅkai
iruntu, vaikuntattuḷ niṉṟu,
teḷinta eṉ cintaiyakam kaḷiyātē,
eṉṉai āḷvāy-eṉakku aruḷi,
naḷirnta cīr ulakam mūṉṟuṭaṉ viyappa,
nāṅkaḷ kūttu āṭi niṉṟu ārppa,
paḷiṅku nīr mukiliṉ pavaḷampōl kaṉivāy
civappa, nī kāṇa vārāyē. (IX–2–4)

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Translation

You did unto me clarity impart and would from me never depart,
Oh, my Master, reposing in Puḷiṅkuṭi, You remain seated
In Varakuṇamaṅkai and in Vaikuṇṭam You keep standing,
May You unto me shed Your grace cool that shall astound
The worlds three and make us dance with joy, let us also behold
Your bewitching fruit-like lips like unto the coral creeper
That entwines the dark cloud, laden with limpid water.

Notes

(i) In His iconic manifestation, the Lord assumes different postures; in certain pilgrim centres, He reposes, in some, He is seen seated, while, in others, He keeps standing. These can be adored individually as well as collectively, as in this song. As Saint Nammāḻvār contemplated on the manifestations of the Lord, in His worshippable Forms, at the various pilgrim centres, certain special aspects and attributes of the Lord presented themselves to him, forming the subject-matter of his meditation, in each centre. Thus, these three holy places, jointly mentioned here, throw light, according to the illuminating author of "Āçârya Hṛdayam", on the three progressive stages of God-love, known as 'Para Bhakti', 'Para Jnâna', and 'Parama Bhakti'.

Having endowed the Āḻvâr with clarity of thought, shorn of doubt, discrepancy and deviation (VIII-8) and kindled in him God-love of rare magnitude, the Lord is now nestling round him in various postures, eager to get hold of him, at the pinnacle of his devotion (parama Bhakti). The Lord is in the same predicament, as one, with pinching hunger, moving impatiently, in and around the kitchen where food is being cooked, vide aphorism 177 of 'Āçârya Hṛdayam'.

(ii) It will certainly astound the denizens of the three worlds when they see that the Lord has responded to the entreaties of the Āḻvâr and come out of His repose; the

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Āḻvār and the fellow-devotees will bubble with joy and dance, on seeing the Lord's bewitching smiles from His radiant, red lips.

pavaḷam pōl kaṉi vāy civappa, nī kāṇa
vantu, niṉ pal nilā muttam
tavaḷ katir muṟuval ceytu, niṉ
tirukkaṇ-tāmarai tayaṅka niṉṟaruḷāy-
pavaḷa naṉ paṭarkkīḻ caṅku uṟai porunal
taṉ tiruppuḷiṅkuṭik kiṭantāy!
kavaḷa mā kaḷiṟṟiṉ iṭar keṭat taṭattuk
kāy ciṉap paṟavai ūrntāṉē! (IX–2–5)

Translation

My Lord, You do, in lovely Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi, repose,
On the bank of Porunal where converge conches in plenty,
The bird (Garuḍa), who unto Your enemies is hostile, You rode
And rushed to the pond to rescue the elephant hefty;
May You deign to come a few paces, for me to behold
The smiles that play on Your coral lips which do hold
Your sparkling teeth, moon-like and Your lotus eyes, big and bold.

Note

The Āḻvār prays that the Lord be pleased to appear before him, even as He had presented Himself to Gajendra, the elephant in great distress, in response to his call for help. As the Lord paces in front of him, the Āḻvār would like to behold the Lord's sweet smiles, playing gently on His coral lips and the lovely pair of lotus eyes.

kāy ciṉap paṟavai ūrntu, poṉ malaiyiṉ
mīmicaik kār mukil pōla,
mā ciṉa māli, mālimāṉ eṉṟu aṅku
avar paṭak kaṇaṉṟu, muṉ niṉṟa
kāy ciṉa vēntē! katir muṭiyāṉē!
kuḷi vayal tiruppuḷiṅkuṭiyāy!
kāy cina āḻi, caṅku, vāḷ, vil, taṇṭu
ēnti em iṭar kaṭivāṉē! (IX–2–6)

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Translation

Your terrific anger destroys your enemies, oh, Sire,
The irate bird you rode, like unto the rain-cloud,
Perched on a mount of gold and the raging demons quelled;
The radiant crown you don and in your hands do bear
The weapons hot to cut out all my ills, oh, Lord,
May you, Who, in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi, have taken up abode,
Amid fields fertile, let me your lotus eyes behold.

Notes

Apprehending that the lack of response from the Lord to his entreaties, in the earlier songs, might be due to his dense sins, the Āḻvār point out to the Lord that He, who destroyed the powerful demons, Māli, Sumāli and others who preceded Rāvaṇa, should have no difficulty in destroying his sins. If the Lord's anger unto His enemies is deadly, Garuḍa, His mount, is even more hostile towards them and so are the Lord's weapons, conch, discus, mace, sword and bow, all of them breathing fire.

em iṭar kaṭintu, iṅku eṉṉai āḻvāṉē!
imaiyavar tamakkum āṅku aṉaiyāy!
cem maṭal malarum tāmaraip paḷaṉat
taṉ tiruppuḷiṅkuṭik kiṭantāy!
nammuṭai aṭiyar kavvaikaṇṭu ukantu,
nām kaḷittu, uḷam nalam kūra,
im maṭa ulakar kāṇa, nī orunāḷ
iruntiṭāy–eṅkaḷ kaṉmukappē. (IX–2–7)

Translation

My ills you did cut out and me Your vassal made
And so do You unto the Celestials as well, my Lord;
In lovely Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi You repose, in whose cool waters
The red lotus blooms with petals nice, may You remain seated
Just one day, so that your devotees do revel
And we thereupon rejoice and the duds on Earth behold you, as well.

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Note

The Lord, Who is reposing in cool Tiruppuḷiṅkuti, is the Universal Saviour Who extends protection not only to the frail humans over here, in this land of dark nescience, but also to the hefty, head-swollen denizens of the upper worlds. The Āḻvār entreats the Lord to walk down to where he is, the tamarind tree in Āḻvār Tirunakari, or at least get up and remain seated. "Just for a day" should not be taken literally; it is like a man, in deep thirst, asking for water just to moisten his parched-up lips or a person wanting merely to have a glance of something hidden, which he longs to see. Certainly, on seeing the object longed for, he would want to embrace it and do things of that sort. In the process, the Āḻvār would also like to watch and enjoy the jubilation of the Lord's devotees besides giving a chance to the men of the world, caught up in worldly pursuits, to behold the Lord in the altered posture and appreciate His gracious gesture, betokening his fellow-feeling.

eṅkaḷ kaṉ mukappē, ulakarkaḷ ellām
iṇai-aṭi toḻutu, eḻutu, iṟaiñci,
taṅkaḷ aṉṉu āṟa, tamatu col valattāl
talaittalaic ciṟantu pūcippa,
tiṅkaḷ cēr mātat tiruppuḷiṅkuṭiyāy!
tiru vaikuntattuḷḷāy! tēvā!
iṅkaṉ mā ñālattu itanuḷum orunāḷ
iruntitāy-vīṟṟu iṭam koṇṭē. (IX–2–8)

Translation

Oh, Lord, You repose in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi whose castles tall
Soar right up to the Moon, in Tiruvaikuṇṭam You keep standing,
May You right here remain seated, in front of us all,
For a day at least, for the worldly men to pray in tones resounding
And prostrate with love intensified, vying with each other.

Notes

(i) The Lord is known to remain seated in the Durbar hall in the high Heavens, where He grants audience. The

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Āḻvār would, however, pray unto the Lord, reclining in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi, to appear like-wise, right here, so as to attract the people over here and make them worship Him, to their heart's fill, in grateful appreciation of His great gesture.

(ii) *To pray in tones resounding*:

What really moves the Lord and what He looks for in us, are neither the matter comprised in the hymns we sing in His praise nor even the manner in which we sing them but cordiality and humility in our hearts. Whereas the high class brahmins, swelling with pride over their stature and learning, address the Deity, in their usual accents, high-sounding Sankrit phrases, "Victory unto You" and so on, the so-called low class people praise the Lord, in their simple, unsophisticated, rustic tongue, as follows:

"Dear Lord, do Thou drink milk! do Thou eat Fruit! do Thou wear warm clothes!" and so on.

viṟṟu iṭam koṇṭu, viyaṉkoḷ mā ñālattu
itaṉuḷum iruntiṭāy-aṭiyōm
pōṟṟi ōvātē, kaṇiṉai kuḷira,
putu malar ākattaip paruka,
cēṟṟu iḷa vāḷai cennelūṭu ukalum
ceḻum paṇait tiruppuḷiṅkuṭiyāy!
kūṟṟamāy, acurar kulamutal arinta
koṭuviṉaip paṭaikaḷ vallāṉē! (IX–2–9)

Translation

Oh, Lord, reposing in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi, amid paddy fields fertile,
Where fishes young wade thro' water in marshy soil,
Oh, wielder of weapons which deal on the Asurās blows deadly!
May You, in this land vast, remain seated stately,
For us, your vassals, to sing your praise in benedictive hymns

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And for ever drink deep the exquisite charm
Of your delicate form, like unto flower in fresh bloom.

Notes

(i) The Lord, in His boundless grace, has deigned to come to this distasteful land, with all its dirt and devilry, and present His worshippable Form to the householders over here, despite their callous indifference. It is indeed an act of grace galore, on His part, to have condescended, out of sheer love, to make Himself visible to the worldly men, who love all but Him Who really matters. Well, it is in His Arcā (Worshippable) Form that the Lord hangs on, willy-nilly, to the frail mankind and tries to redeem them, at all costs, their indifference notwithstanding, vide also aphorism 38 of 'Śrīvaçana Bhūṣaṇam'.

(ii) The Āḻvār has no doubt enjoyed the reclining pose of the Lord at Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi. And yet, he longs to see Him seated and enjoy the new posture of the Lord, his eyes drinking deep the nectarean Form of the Lord. Śrī Parāśara Bhattar would say that one can revel in Śrīraṅgam, beholding the Lord in a reclining as well as standing posture and Goddess Raṅganāyakī, in the sitting posture.

koṭu viṉaip paṭaikaḷ vallaiyāy, amararkku
iṭar keṭa, acurarkaṭku iṭar cey
kaṭu viṉai naṁcē! eṉṉuṭai amutē!
kali vayal tiruppuḷiṅkuṭiyāy!
vaṭivu iṉai illā malarmakaḷ, maṟṟai
nilamakaḷ piṭikkum mel aṭiyaik
koṭuviṉaiyēṉum piṭikka, nī orunāḷ
kūvutal, varutal ceyyāyē. (IX–2–10)

Translation

My Lord, reposing in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi amid fields fertile,
Your valiant weapons are unto Asuras deadly and do the Devas succour;

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You, my Nectar, may you beckon me or draw unto me near,
Just one day, that I may stroke your feet tender,
Your lotus and earth-born Spouses of peerless beauty press gently.

Notes

(i) It may be recalled that the gnostic Mother of Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī had referred to the latter, in VI-5-10, as the proto-type of the three Divine Spouses, Mahālakṣmī, Mother Earth and Nappiṉṉai. And now, the Āḻvār requests the Lord that he may be granted an opportunity to massage His tender feet which even His delicate Spouses of matchless charm handle with great care and press gently. For this purpose, the Lord should either beckon the Āḻvār to where He is or come down to his place.

(ii) No doubt, the Lord is, according to His own admission and the verdict of the Vedas, absolutely impartial to one and all, bereft of love and hatred to any—"Samoham sarvabhūteṣu nadveṣyoṣti na priyaḥ." "Devānām thānavānānça sāmānyamathi Deivatam" etc If it is still mentioned here that He is a veritable poison unto the Asuras, unleashing on them His lethal weapons of enormous power and succours the Devas unto whom He is sweet as nectar, there is hardly any contradiction. Did not the Lord bestow His grace and affections on Prahlāda and Vibhiṣaṇa of Rākṣasa clan? Did He not try His utmost to bring round such a heinous offender as Rāvaṇa, who deserved to be slain with a single arrow, even as the far more powerful Vāli was done away with? If the ungodly Asuras rush to their doom, even as the flies get burnt out by the glowing lamp and people fall into tanks, dug for common good and commit suicide, surely, it is no blot on the Lord's impartiality. Verily, one man's food is another's poison. Here then is the Nectar of the Āḻvār, reposing in Tiruppuliṅkuṭi, got at without going through the arduous process of churning the deep ocean and all that.

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(iii) For the fulfilment of his wish, the Āḻvār suggests that the Lord could either send for him or come down to him. In point of relative importance, the Lord's condescending visit to the Āḻvār is indeed more important than His beckoning the Āḻvār and the two should have been more appropriately mentioned in the reverse order. Nampiḷḷai's thought-provoking explanation for the present order of mention is that the Āḻvār would prefer being sent for, so that he could witness and enjoy the grand setting in which the Divine Spouses engage themselves in massaging the Lord's tender feet with meticulous care, a setting, the Āḻvār dared not disturb by making the Lord's visit to him, as his first choice.

kūvutal varutal ceytiṭāy eṉṟu,
kurai katal kaṭaintavaṉ-taṉṉai
mēvi naṉku amarnta viyaṉ puṉal porunal
vaḻuti nātaṉ, caṭakōpaṉ
nā iyal pāṭal āyirattuḷḷum
ivaiyum ōr pattum vallārkaḷ
ōvutal iṉṟi ulakam mūṉṟu aḷantāṉ
aṭi-iṇai uḷḷattu ōrvārē. (IX–2–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the thousand from the sweet tongue of Catakōpaṉ,
Chief of Vaḻutinātu, where Porunal with water full does run,
Who supplicated the Lord, who did the roaring ocean churn,
Either to beckon him or unto him come down,
Whom the Lord did graciously oblige and sustain,
Will for ever meditate upon the feet of the one,
Who once did all the three worlds span.

Note

The Lord, who exerted Himself a lot to meet the aspiration of the self-centred Devas and got them ambrosia from the depths of the Milk-ocean, will certainly fulfil the wishes of the selfless devotees like the Āḻvār. The chanters of this decad will also be capacitated to enshrine the Lord's pair of feet in their hearts and meditate on them, without intermission.

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Ninth Centum—Third Decad (IX-3)
(Ōr āyiramāy)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḻvār fervently prayed that the Lord be pleased to turn His sweet glances on him, grant audience to him and the denizens of all the three worlds, remaining in a seated posture, beckon him or come down to him and permit him to stroke His lovely pair of feet and so on. The Lord, however, focussed the Saint's attention on the fundamental relationship that subsists between them, which hardly affords scope for such entreaties by him and, much less, for the grief that results from the Lord's apparent non-compliance. The basic fact of the Lord being none other than Nārāyaṇa, in whom all things and beings inhere and who abides in all, reduces all things and beings to the abject position of mere bodies unto the Life within, that dominates, directs, and supports them. Consoled thus by the Lord, in quite a convincing manner, the Saint not only regains his composure but admires the Lord's tender solicitude for His subjects. This decad gives expression to the Saint's rapturous admiration of the Lord's great concern for His creatures and loving condescension. Having set out in VIII-8, the substance of the eight-lettered, three-syllabled Tirumantra and dwelt on the deep urge for Divine Service which 'Āya', the dative case-ending of the word 'Nārāyaṇāya' in the said Mantra reveals, the Āḻvār spells out the Mantra itself, in the opening song of this decad, which declares: "Nārāyaṇaṉ is our sole Benefactor".

ōr āyiramāy ulaku ēḻ aḷikkum
pēr āyiram koṇṭatu ōr pītu uṭaiyaṉ,
kār āyiṉa kāḷa nal mēṉiyiṉaṉ,
nārāyaṇaṉ, naṅkaḷ pirāṉ-avaṉē. (IX–3–1)

Translation

Nārāyaṇaṉ is our sole Benefactor Who bears
A thousand names and the seven worlds succours;
Indeed, each name of the cloud-hued Lord of exquisite form
Will the functions fulfil of a thousand names.

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Notes

(i) When it is said that the Supreme Lord bears a thousand names, " Devo nāmasahasravān ", it only means ' many ' and not literally limited to a bare thousand. When it is said, pointing to a band of valiant warriors of established fame, that each one of them is equivalent to a thousand fighters, we don't take this figure literally but understand that each one possesses the strength and skill of many. Even so, the Lord bears innumerable names, each of which has the potentiality of several other names and fulfils the multifarious functions of the Lord. Indeed, the holy names of the Lord are most endearing and soothing to a great degree. Koyilāyttāṉ a staunch disciple of Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar had a son, named after the Āçārya, out of love for him. The son, however, passed away, plunging Koyilāyttāṉ in inconsolable grief. Bemoaning his great loss, he cast himself at the feet of the Ācārya who consoled him thus: " I know your grief is so great, because your son bore my name, which is very dear unto you. Now, I ask you not to grieve any more, for I bear that name and am alive to comfort you ". So saying, the compassionate Āçārya got an image made like himself and handed it to the bereaved disciple, to dwell upon lovingly, as a holy Souvenir.

(ii) The Lord's exquisite Form helps one to see, in Him the aggregate of the excellences denoted by His numerous names and enjoy them, all at once. His Form thus impounds His names like the embankment which contains the flooding waters, preventing their erosive excursions in different directions.

avaṉē akal ñālam puṭaittu iṭantāṉ;
avaṉē aṉṟu uṇṭu umiḻntāṉ, aḷantāṉ;
avaṉē avaṉum, avaṉum, avaṉum;
avaṉē marru ellāmum-aṟintaṉamē. (IX–3–2)

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Translation

'Tis He Who did ordain the spacious Universe
And pulled it out from beneath the deep waters
'Tis He Who the said Universe did gulp once,
Then spat and spanned; he (Brahmā), he (Śivā) and he (Indra),
He is,
And all other things and beings, He is besides;
[This] we learn (thro' knowledge by Him bestowed).

Note

The Supreme Lord, as the great Ordainer of the Universe, combines in Himself all the three causes of creation, the material, the operative and the instrumental. He is also the Universal Saviour Who sustained the Universe inside His stomach, during the deluge, rescued it from the oceanic depths after encountering the formidable Hiraṇyākṣa, the golden-eyed demon and so on. The lands expropriated by the powerful Mahābali were reclaimed by the Lord by spanning all the worlds, in just three strides, and restored to the Devās. The Lord is the Internal Controller of one and all, without distinction of high and low; the original text of the song runs as " He is he, he and he....", in the Vedic pattern of '*Sa* Brahmās *sa* Śivas *sa* Indras sokṣaraḥ Paramaśvarāṭ...." (Puruṣa Sūkta). The pronoun ' He ', occuring seven times, in the original text of this song, is indicated by ' Saḥ ' (He) occuring in the above vedic text. The exalted Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and other Celestials as well as the ordinary denizens elsewhere are all dominated by the Lord, as their Internal Controller, a fact revealed to the Āḻvār by the Lord Himself, vide I-1-1.

aṟintaṉa vēta arum poruḷ nūlkaḷ
aṟintaṉa koḷka, arum poruḷ ātal;
aṟintaṉar ellām ariyai vaṇaṅki,
aṟintaṉar-nōykaḷ aṟukkum maruntē. (IX–3–3)

Translation

The texts, that reveal the Vedic truths abstruse, apprehend
The Lord as no more than One difficult to comprehend;

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The learned ones who propitiate Him do no better fare,
They look upon Him as no more than the certain cure
For their ills and evils; (they perceive Him not
As the fountain source of bliss supreme and on Him dote not.)

Note

The Vedas proclaimed, "Vedāha metaṁ Puruṣaṁ Mahāntaṁ....", that is, the Supreme Lord has been comprehended by them. But what indeed did they know except that the Lord is not easy of comprehension? The 'Itihāsas' (Rāmāyaṇa and MahāBhārata) and the 'Purāṇas', which serve as the key to the study of the Vedas, fare no better. And what about the great sages like Vyāsa, Parāśara and Vālmīki? They could see in the Lord, no more than the cure for all their ills and evils—"Haraṇā Deva dukkhānāṁ Harṛtyabhidīyate". It is a pity, they could not delve deeper than this and revel in His exquisite Form and nectarean sweetness, as the Āḻvār Saints did.

maruntē naṅkāḷ pōka makiḻccikku eṉṟu
perum tēvar kuḻāṅkaḷ pitaṟṟum pirāṉ,
karum tēvaṉ, emmāṉ, kaṇṇaṉ, viṇ ulakam
tarum tēvanaic cōrēl kaṇṭāy, maṉamē! (IX–3–4)

Translation

Lose not, my mind, your hold on Kaṇṇaṉ, our dark-hued Sire,
The Lord, Who the heavenly bliss does grant,
Whose glory, as their elixir, the great stabiliser
Of their bliss in heaven, the Celestials do for ever chant.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār exhorts his mind, as follows:
"The Lord of nectarean sweetness, unto the Celestials in Heaven, came down here as kṛṣṇa, to put us also in Heaven, in the midst of the 'Nitya Sūris' over there. Having got at such a great Benefactor, cling fast to Him and never loosen Your grip on Him".

(ii) Even the Lord's charming beauty is an impediment for service, as it steals away the hearts of the devotees,

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thereby tending to slacken the service. Even as the prayer for service, contained in 'Dvaya', the 'Mantra Ratna' (Gem of a Mantra), is eternal, prayer for the eradication of the obstacle to Divine service should also be eternal, for the reason that this obstacle confronts even the inhabitants of Heaven, namely, the 'Released' souls and the Ever-free (Nitya Sūrīs). This has been brought out, in this song, through a statement ascribed to the 'Nitya Sūrīs' that even they, in Heaven, get thrown off their feet by the ecstasy of the Lord's personal charms and the marvellous communications from that inexhaustible fountain of bliss. They get cured of such temporary aberrations by the Lord Himself, Who serves as the stabilising antidote (Elixir) and puts them back on the right track, namely, self-less service unto the Lord, bereft of the last shred of selfish enjoyment and happiness of their own.

maṉamē! uṉṉai valviṉaiyēṉ ɪrantu,
kaṉamē colliṉēṉ-ɪtu cōrēl kaṇṭāy!-
puṉam meviṛa pūn taṇ tuḻāy alaṅkal,
iṉam ētum ɪlāṉai ataivatumē. (IX–3–5)

Translation

You, my mind, this sinner dire does entreat
And tell in accent firm that you shall be resolute
And attain the Lord of peerless charm, Who sports
The lovely garland of tulaci, cool and fine
That thrives so well on His charming person.

Note

Apprehending that his mind might treat his advice lightly and even brush it aside, the Āḻvār stresses again, the imperative need of its sticking to the Supreme Lord of exquisite charm, bedecked with tuḻaci garland, cool and fragrant. This is like entreating a person to drink the delicious milk. In Vaiṣṇava symbology, the holy tuḻaci wreath (Vaijayanti) is Lord Viṣṇu's sovereign insignium, proclaiming His Universal Lordship. The great Naṅcīyar would go into

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raptures on beholding Namperumāḷ, the mobile Deity in Śriraṅgam, decked with tuḷaci wreaths, during the ceremonial processions. He would then recite this song which sent him into transport of joy.

aṭaivatum aṉi ār malar maṅkaitōḷ;
miṭaivatum acurarkku vem pōrkaḷē;
kaṭaivatum kaṭaluḷ amutam; eṉ maṉam
uṭaivatum avaṟkē-oruṅkākavē. (IX–3–6)

Translation

Thaws down my mind fully, steeped in contemplation
Of the Lord's dalliance with His bejewelled spouse, lotus-born,
His encounters fierce with Acurars and His churning the ocean
To grant unto Devas, ambrosia, out of deep compassion.

Note

The Āḻvār's mind having responded to his appeal exceedingly well, he now describes its ecstatic reactions, in the course of its contemplation of the Lord's glorious deeds and auspicious traits. The Āḻvār's mind thaws down, as it dwells on the Lord's tender solicitude even for the selfish and self-centred Devas and the enormous pains He had taken to churn the ocean and secure for them the ambrosia, longed for by them. According to Nampiḷḷai, it looks as if the Lord churned the Milk-ocean, just to churn the minds of devotees of the Āḻvār's calibre and intensify their God-love.

ākam cēr naraciṅkam-atuāki, ōr
ākam vaḷ ukirāl piḷantāṉ uṟai
māka vaikuntam kāṉpataṟku eṉ maṉam
ēkam eṉṉum-irāppakal iṉṟiyē. (IX–3–7)

Translation

'Tween day and night, my mind makes no distinction,
Yearn it does, all the time, to behold the high Heaven,
The abode great of the Lord, Who did combine

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Man and lion in a single form and cleaved in twain,
With nails sharp, yet another form (of Iraṇiyaṉ)

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār says that his mind, which revelled in the contemplation of the Lord's wondrous deeds, now longs to see the Lord in His transcendent glory, in the High Heavens.

(ii) It is indeed a very odd combination, outside the realm of possibility, the conjunction of Man and Lion, in a single frame. And yet, the Omni-potent Lord assumed such a Form, in His unbounded zeal for the welfare of Prahlāda, the young devotee, *par excellence*. Deeply implanted in the Āḻvār's chastened mind, even at that distance of time, was the strange but highly delectable form of the Man-Lion (*Narasimha*).

iṉṟip pōka iruviṉaiyum keṭuttu,
oṉṟi yākkai pukāmai uyyakkoḷvāṉ
niṉṟa vēṅkaṭam nīḷ nilattu uḷḷatu;
ceṉṟu tēvarkaḷ kaitoḻuvārkaḷē. (IX–3–8)

Translation

Right in this sprawling world is the holy mount Vēṅkaṭam,
Where stands the Lord, Who the devotees awaits and salves them,
Clearing them of fruits, good and bad; Celestials they could be deemed,
That unto the holy Mount repair and worship the Lord Supreme

Notes

(i) In the preceding song, the Āḻvār longed for the vision of the Lord in Heaven but that would not be possible in this material body. The Lord, however, pointed out to the Āḻvār the possibility of his enjoying, right in this body, the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭaṁ, in this very land. But the Āḻvār avers that it is only the stout-hearted Devas, who can remain stable and enjoy the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭaṁ and that it would be next to impossible

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for men of his melting tenderness of heart, breaking down in ecstasy, eyes swimming with tears of delight and faltering legs, to steady themselves and worship Lord Veṅkaṭēśa. And so, according to the Āḻvār, Tiruvēṅkaṭam, though situated on Earth, affords little scope for worship, by one of his stance.

(ii) It is the Lord's spontaneous grace that extricates the subjects from the clutches of the fruits of their good and bad actions which consign them to Svarg and hell, respectively. The one is as much an impediment as the other, to the final emancipation of the individual. The upaniṣads declare that the fruits, either way, have to be enjoyed by the individual soul, unless the Lord, in His redemptive grace, cuts them out and puts the subject in Heaven, with a clean slate, unencumbered in any way, by one thing or the other, 'merit' as well as 'demerit'.

toḻutu, mā malar nīr cuṭar tūpam koṇṭu
eḻutum eṉṉumitu mikai; ātaliṉ,
paḻutuil tol pukaḻp pāmpu-aṇaip paḷḷiyāy!
taḻuvumāṟu aṟiyēṉ-uṉa tāḷkaḻē. (IX–3–9)

Translation

Oh, Lord, resting on serpent bed, 'tis your ancient glory flawless
That one can worship you with no effort; I am at a loss,
How indeed I can your feet attain, for heavy you deem
The ritualistic worship with flowers fine, lamp and fragrant fumes.

Note

The Lord refutes the stand taken by the Āḻvār, in the preceding song, that only Devas can possibly worship the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, by pointing out to him that even men of this world do go there and worship. But then, the Āḻvār is quick to realise that the Lord's tender solicitude for His subjects is such that He deems even the simple service of offering flowers and sacramental water and burning incense before Him, much-too-heavy. This, the Āḻvār points out

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to the Lord and enquires of Him what service he could render unto Him. The Vedic text, 'Bhūyiṣṭāṁ te namauktiṁ videma' is interpreted, by some, as "we will utter, in plenty, the word 'namaḥ'," meaning that we do not belong to ourselves but exclusively to the Lord. The great Vaiṣṇava preceptors would, however, interpret it, in the light of this particular song, emphasising the Lord's remarkable tenderness of heart and amazing solicitude for His subjects. Accordingly, the text in question is taken by them to mean: "We will utter the word 'namaḥ' which, according to Your extra-liberal standards, is too weighty a submission by us". The prose order is arranged as "te bhūyiṣṭāṁ nama uktiṁ videma", in order to get at this meaning. In fine, the Āḻvār says that it is well nigh impossible to render any service to the Lord, when one meditates on His remarkable tenderness of heart, which makes Him look upon even the simple offerings like flowers and water and burning incense as part of worship, as imposing a heavy burden on Him. This is indeed very true to His time-honoured fame, as One of easy worshippability.

tāḻa tāmaraiyāṉ uṉatu untiyāṉ;
vāḻ koḻ nīḻ maḻu-āḻi uṉ ākattāṉ;
āḻarāyt toḻuvārum amararkaḷ;
nālum eṉ pukaḻkō-uṉa cīlamē? (IX–3–10)

Translation

You do on your navel bear the one on lotus petal born
While he who wields the trident, long and bright, does lean
On your person; tender love you bear unto the Devas, who pose
As your vassals; were I to laud your grace galore
Till the end of time, would it exhaust your glory great?

Note

The Āḻvār is weighed down by the amazing simplicity of the Lord and His grace galore, extended even to the selfish Devas, the denizens of the upper worlds, and the self-centred Brahmā and Rudra, by holding the former right on His navel and by assigning a part of His body to the latter.

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Surely, even persons, quite competent to sing the Lord's praise, can never exhaust it, although they sing His glory for all time.

cīlam ellai-ilāṉ aṭimēl, aṉi kōlam
nīḷ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ col-
mālai āyirattuḷ ivai pattiṉiṉ-
pāḷar vaikuntam ēṟutal pāṉmaiyē. (IX–3–11)

Translation

'Tis but natural that those somehow associated with these songs ten,
Out of the thousand, in the hymnal garland of Kurukūr Caṭa-kōpān,
Adoring the feet of the Lord of loving condescension
And boundless compassion, do ascend the high Heaven.

Notes

(i) This decad is in adoration of the Lord's loving condescension which knows no limits. The Supreme Lord, higher than whom there is none, freely mingles, without any qualms, compunction or mental reservation, with the lowest of the lowly.

(ii) Contemplating the Lord's grace galore, the Āḻvār also goes to the extent of asserting that even those, who are in some way, however remote, associated with these ten songs, will ascend the high Heaven, as a matter of course. It is not necessary that one should get these songs by wrote of heart or delve deep into their meanings for reaping the benefit of natural entry into Heaven, set out in this decad. It will suffice if one manages to remain in the place where these songs are sung, no matter even if one is inclined to doze about and gets actually landed in sleep. Even for such a person, Heaven becomes, as it were, the heir-loom, as Nampiḷḷai puts it, by way of driving home the benefit, spelt out in this end-song.

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Ninth Centum—Fourth Decad (IX-4)
(Maiyār Karuṅkaṇṇi)

Preamble

The 'Śāstras' (Scriptural texts) proclaim, on the one hand, that the Supreme Lord is One of unbridled independence, and on the other, depict Him as an embodiment of innumerable auspicious traits. The latter get submerged when the former holds sway. But when the Lord's independence gets subdued through the irresistible spell cast by Mahā Lakṣmī's personal magnetism and the persuasive eloquence of Her pleadings, the auspicious qualities denoted by His name, 'Nārāyaṇa', become pronounced. These are: Tender solicitude (vātsalya), Sovereignty (Svāmitva), Loving condescension (Sauśilya), Easy accessibility (Saulabhya), knowledge (Jñāna) and Power or Energy (Śakti). Fully aware that the Lord does possess, *inter alia*, the trait of loving condescension and that the Divine Mother is the fountain source of inspiration for the influx of this grand trait, the Āḻvār naturally grieved, all the more, over his erstwhile plight of separation from the Lord, despite his inordinate longing for incessant communion with Him. The Āḻvār pined for the on-coming of the Lord, in the manner He rushed to the rescue of Gajendra, the pious elephant in dire distress and sprang forth from the pillar to shed His unique grace on Prahlādha, the young devotee. The Lord, on His part, was keen to maintain His reputation as the Repository of all auspicious qualities and presented Himself to the Āḻvār; if He did not respond to the Āḻvār's call even now, despite His deep yearning, all that is claimed for Him by the Scriptures would be of no more than academic value, mere words, high-sounding like the roaring of the sea. Overjoyed by the Lord's presence (mental vision), the Āḻvār ends up this decad by giving vent ro his gratitude for the Lord having pressed him into service and got these hymns, sung by him, for the edification of the pious. "What a bliss and that too, bestowed on a single individual!" is how the Āḻvār revolves in his mind.

mai ār karuṅkaṇṇi, kamala malarmēl
ceyyāḷ tirumārviṉil cēr tirumālē!
veyyār cuṭar-āḻi, curi caṅkam ēntum
kaiyaḷ uṉṉaik kāṇak karutum-eṉ kaṇṇē. (IX–4–1)

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Translation

Oh, Lord holding the Conch lovely and the dazzling discus hot,
Long do my eyes to behold You; on Your winsome chest,
You bear, oh, Tirumāl, (Lakṣmi) the lotus-born of complexion red,
Whose dark eyes are with collyrium neatly dressed.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār longs to behold the grand assembly of the Divine Mother of exquisite charm and the powerful conch and discus on the Lord's person, the former on His broad chest and the latter in His lovely hands.

(ii) *The Divine Consort with collyrium-dressed eyes:*

It is imperative that Mahā Lakṣmī, the eternal Spouse of the Supreme Lord, the great intercessor between man and God, should always be in Conjunction with the Lord. The Divine Mother's presence, beside the Lord, is necessary when the subject submits to His protection, so as to make him shed all fear of punishment at the hands of the strict and unrelenting judge and secure His succour, sure and certain, through the Mother's recommendatory role. If, in the exercise of unbridled independence, the Lord, however, turned a deaf ear to the Mother's entreaty, the beloved Spouse that she is, she unleashes her irresistible physical charms and casts a bewitching spell on Him; enthralled by her ravishing beauty, He then carries out her dictates, in full. Again, after the subject's admission to the Lord's sweet fold, the Mother's presence is essential, so as to enable the subject to render the coveted service unto the Divine Couple. The enthralling charm of the Mother's eyes being thus the main source of his sustenance, the Āḻvār naturally dwells on the beauty of Her eyes, right at the beginning of this song (as in the original text). The Mother's dark eyes have a natural, built-in grace of their own and hardly need any make-up, by way of dressing them with collyrium, which is but an auspicious formality, gone through, as a matter-of-course.

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(iii) *Lakṣmi, the lotus-born of red complexion*: Emerging from the red lotus, the Divine Mother acquires its colour as well—"Padme sthitām padma varṇām", as the Śrī-Sūkta says. The lotus-born Lakṣmī found even the lotus petals, known for their softness, a little too hard for her tender feet and chose to get herself lodged on the Lord's winsome chest. It is indeed a case of mutual attraction, the Lord succumbing to the Mother's charms and the latter, in turn, getting intoxicated by the Lord's exquisite Form. As Nampiḷḷai would put it, the Mother feels drawn to the lovely conch and discus, gracefully held by the Lord, in His hands, even as the Lord is attracted by the lotus flower held by the Mother.

(iv) Instead of saying straightaway that he pines for the Lord's presence in sweet conjunction with the Divine Mother and the lovely weapons, the Āḻvār says that his eyes long to behold Him. This is like the hungry beggar pleading for the appeasement of his child's hunger first.

kaṇṇē! uṇṇaik kāṇak karuti, eṉ neñcam,
eṉṉēkoṇṭa cintaiyatāy, niṉṟu iyampum;
viṇṇōr muṉivarkku eṉṟum kāṇpu-ariyāyai
naṇṇātoḻiyēṉ eṉṟu nāṉ aḻaippaṉē. (IX–4–2)

Translation

Many a thought thinks my revolving mind,
Eager to behold You, virtually my pair of eyes;
I beckon You, even celestials and sages can't visualise,
For, to attain You, I am fully determined.

Notes

(i) Having pointed out the longing of his eyes in the preceding song the Āḻvār now recounts the manner in which he and his mind yearn to get at the Lord. The Lord has been described as the Āḻvār's pair of eyes. This follows the Vedic text, "Cakṣucca dhraṣṭavyañca Nārāyaṇaḥ", declaring the Lord as the eyes; even as the eyes help us to see all things around, the Lord helps us to behold Him without whose loving grace, none can have so much

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as a glimpse of Him. When the Āḻvār says that his mind longs to look at the Lord, it only means that his eyes, confederate with his mind, long to see Him. The eyes, by themselves, cannot see a thing, even though they may be wide open, when the mind is pre-occupied with something else; hence, the necessity of the mind's active conjunction with the eyes. In the case of the worldlings (Samsāris), the mind and the eyes will be steeped in sensual pleasures. But here is the Āḻvār whose mind and eyes stand rivetted to the Lord, in the manner Lord Kṛṣṇa set out in His Song Celestial, "Yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni Sā niśā paśyato muneḥ" (Gita II-69).

(ii) The many thoughts pondered over by the Alvār's mind are but the different ways or facets of God-enjoyment, as set out by Saint Rāmānuja in 'Śrī Vaikuṇṭa Gadya", in the string of Ślokas from 'Kadhā ahaṁ', up to āsām vartayitvā'. The Alvar's mind cries out and thus discharges the function of the tongue as well.

(iii) True it is, that the Lord is not easily attainable even by Brahmā and other Celestials and sages of the eminence of Sanaka, Sanandana etc. And yet, the Āḻvār is intent upon gaining access to the Lord, who could certainly break all precedents and get within the Āḻvār's reach, even as He had dowered on him, out of His spontaneous grace, perfect knowledge, shorn of doubt, despair, discrepancies and deviations.

aḻaikkiṉṟa aṭināyēṉ, nāy kūḻai vāḻā!
kuḻaikkiṉṟatu pōla, eṉ uḷḷam kuḻaiyum;
maḻaikku aṉṟu kuṉram eṭuttu ā-nirai kāttāy!
piḻaikkiṉṟatu aruḷ eṉṟu pēṭuṟuvaṉē. (IX–4–3)

Translation

The mind of this base fellow, lying low and calling You out,
Whirls like unto the dog eagerly twisting its tail short;
You held once, oh Lord, Mount (Govardhan) aloft

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And spared the cattle, the fury of the rains;
Me Your grace evades and this my mind does pain.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār feels agitated why the Lord, who sheds His grace on all yearning votaries, should withhold it from him alone, in spite of his inordinate longing for incessant communion with Him.

(ii) The Āḻvār submits that he is fully aware of his humble stature and yet, devoured by inordinate God-love, he keeps calling Him, like unto a dog trying hard to express its feelings to its master by twisting its tail. Pity unto the dog, with a short tail, which cannot function in this regard as effectively as a tail of better length! The Āḻvār feels that he too is in the same predicament as the dog with a dwarf tail, unable to express adequately his pangs of separation from the Lord. To a question, supposed to have been put to him by the Lord, as to why he aspires for Him without the requisite means and equipment, the Āḻvār rejoins that He has to shed on him His redemptive grace, in the same way as He shielded the cattle and shepherds from the terrific rains, unleashed by Indra, by holding aloft Mount Govardhan.

uṟuvatu itu eṉṟu, uṉakku āḷ-paṭṭu, niṉkaṇ
peṟuvatu etukol eṉṟu, pētaiyēṉ neñcam
maṟukal ceyyum-vāṉavar tāṉavarkku eṉṟum
aṟivatu ariya ariyāya ammāṉē! (IX–4–4)

Translation

Oh, Lord Ari, none can ever aver what you are,
This vassal knows not what for him is in store,
Whether he will attain and serve You for ever
Or be caught in the vortex of worldly life,
My ignorant mind is indeed in a state of strife.

Notes

(i) When one submits to the Lord's protection, true to one's essential nature of exclusive dependence on the Lord one has indeed to resign oneself to His good grace and

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benign will, without casting doubts of any kind on His dispensation. It should indeed be left to the Lord's sweet will and discretion to deal with us in any manner He deems fit and feasible. And yet, the Āḻvār feels agitated whether the Lord would at all be pleased to bless him with eternal service unto Him in close proximity or still keep him on, in the bondage of 'Samsāra'. The Āḻvār's misery is all the more poignant, he being right in the vanguard of 'Prapannas', whose firm conviction it is, that the Lord is their Sole Sustainer on whom they are totally dependent. It is the exuberance of God-love, which induces such frightful misgivings in the Āḻvār, despite his firm faith in the Lord and his awareness of this *prima facie* contradiction, between conviction and conduct, only goes to augment his misery.

(ii) When questioned by the Lord as to why he allowed himself to be haunted by such fears, the Āḻvār observes that neither he Devas nor the Asuras could comprehend His true nature and manner of dispensation and it was just possible that the Lord had put him also on the same footing.

ariyāya ammāṉai, amarar pirāṉai,
periyāṉai, piramaṉai muṉ paṭaittāṉai,
vari vāḷ-araviṉ aṇaip paḷḷikoḷkiṉṟa
kariyāṉ kaḷal kāṇak karutum-karuttē. (IX–4–5)

Translation

Long do I, in my thoughts, to behold the feet of the dark-hued Lord,
Who does on the somnolent serpent-bed lovely repose, the benevolent Overlord
Of the Celestials, the Lord Supreme, the Sire great,
Who does His devotees' opponents quell, Who did create
Piramaṉ (Brahmā, the four-headed), first and foremost.

Note

That the Lord is most easily accessible to the devout and much beyond the reach of others has been highlighted by the Āḻvār

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himself, in I-3. This has now been pointed out to the Āḻvār by the Lord, who confesses to His easy-accessibility and enquires of the Āḻvār what precisely he wanted from Him. The Āḻvār wants nothing more than beholding the Lord's lovely pair of feet, against the exquisite background of His serpent-bed and his enticing Form, like unto a dark emerald in sweet repose.

karuttē! uṉṉaik kāṇak karuti, eṉ neñcattu
iruttāṉa iruttiṉēṉ; tēvarkaṭku ellām
viruttā! viḻaṅkum cuṭarcōti uyarattu
oruttā! uṉṉai uḷḷum eṉ uḷḷam-ukantē. (IX–4–6)

Translation

You are my very thought, oh, Lord, to behold You, I am determined
And so, You I have planted firmly in my mind;
Up above the Celestials You do soar, you remain
With splendour unique, high up in the effulgent Heaven
Ever do my thoughts in You abide, in sweet contemplation.

Note

The Lord having entered the Āḻvār's mind, in response to his entreaties in the five preceding songs, the Āḻvār now says that he has, for ever, impounded in his mind the Lord who is higher than the highest. He looks upon the Lord as his very thought sticking fast unto Him.

ukantē uṉṉai uḷḷum eṉ uḷḷattu akampāl—
akam-tāṉ amarntē iṭam koṇṭa amalā!
mikum tāṉavaṉ mārvu akaḻam iru kūṟā
nakantāy! naraciṅkam-atu āya uṟuvē! (IX–4–7)

Translation

Oh, immaculate Lord, In me seated firm, You remain,
Your potent nails tore the haughty demon's broad chest in twain,

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Oh, Naraciṅka, revels indeed the inner core of my heart
In the enjoyment of You, my Lord, so sweet.

Note

The Āḻvār feels gratified that the Lord has responded to his call even as He did, in the case of Prahlādā to cater to whose ardent wish, He emerged as Man-Lion, right from inside a pillar and cleaved the haughty Hiraṇya's body into parts. In his present state of exultation, the Āḻvār drowns all his past miseries due to separation from the Lord, nor is he apprehensive of the dreadful prospect of yet another spell of separation from Him. The present enjoyment is so full and complete that it does not admit of brooding over the past desolation or dreading a gloomy future.

uru ākiya āṟu camayaṅkaṭku ellām
poru ākiṉ niṉṟāṉ avaṉ-ellāp poruṭkum
aru ākiya ātiyai, tēvarkaṭku ellām
karu 'ākiya kaṇṇaṉai, kaṇṭukoṇṭēṉē. (IX-4-8)

Translation

Perceive and enjoy do I Kaṇṇaṉ, the Primate,
The sole Sustainer of all lives, the Progenitor great,
Of the Devas, well beyond the mischief of the heresies
Of the six alien systems of philosophy.

Notes

(i) The omnipotent Lord can surely preserve Himself from the onslaught of the heretical doctrines like those of Cārvākas, Jains, Buddhists, Vaiśeṣikas, Śāṅkhyas and Pāśupadhas, denying His very existence. These systems do not admit the authority of the Vedas.

(ii) The Lord is the great Ordainer, being the first Cause of all things and the sole Sustainer of all souls, as their Internal Controller, residing in all things and beings.

(iii) The love-intoxicated Āḻvār could envisage Lord Kṛṣṇa, a by-gone Avatāra, as if he was a contemporary of His. The impious like Śiśupāla could not, however, perceive

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the Lord in His true Form, even though the Lord, in His incarnate Form, was in their midst.

kaṇṭukoṇṭu, eṉ kaṇ-iṇai ārak kaḷittu,
paṇṭai viṉaiyāyiṉa paṟṟoṭu aṟuttu,
toṇṭarkku amutu uṇṇac col-mālaikaḷ coṉṉēṉ—
aṇṭattu amarar perumāṉ aṭiyēṉē. (IX-4-9)

Translation

Lustily do my eyes feast on the Form exquisite,
Of the Chief of the Celestials in Heaven, who did eradicate
My age-long ills and evils and made me His vassal;
Blessed am I to feed the devout with this nectarean hymnal.

Note

Not stopping with enjoying the Lord himself, the Āḻvār extends the delight to others around and to posterity through generations. Indeed, this confers on him a greater joy than that resulting from the severance of his age-long sins and the glorious vision of the Lord. Many indeed are the poets of this world but none has declared the intention in composing the poems, in the manner the Āḻvar has done, in this song. Tiruvāymoḷi has been graciously composed by the Saint in order to nourish the Lord's devotees with the nectarean sweetness of its contents. The opening word "Bhaktāmṛutam", the ambrosia for God-lovers, in the opening invocatory śloka, composed by Śriman Nāthamuni, is derived from this song, based on the Aḻvār's intention, as set out, in this song.

aṭiyāṉ ivaṉ eṉṟu eṉakku ār aruḷ ceyyum
neṭiyāṉai, niṟai pukaḻ am ciṟaip puḷḷiṉ
koṭiyāṉai, kuṉṟāmal ulakam aḷanta
aṭiyāṉai, aṭaintu aṭiyēṉ uyntavāṟē! (IX-4-10)

Translation

Oh, what a bliss this vassal has attained!
The Lord, who the worlds, with no exception, spanned,

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On Whose banner is the bird, of large fame and lovely plumes,
Has lavished on me, as His vassal dear, His grace supreme.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār proclaims with great joy that the Lord has lavished on him His grace galore, looking upon him as His vassal. Here is a suggestion that, although he is not a true servant as such of the Lord, He has deigned to look upon him as one and, on that score, lavished all His affections on him. Delving into the inner core of the meaning yielded by the original text of this song, Nampiḷḷai would say, the Lord's bounty, which is commensurate with His own greatness, is for His own delectation and does not, in the least, depend upon the stature of the recepient, high or low. Did not the Lord set His lovely pair of feet on one and all, without distinction of high or low, unasked and unsolicited, during His advent as Tṛvikrama?

(ii) It is noteworthy, in this context, that the subject fares better as the Lord's servant (vassal) than as His child. Whereas children inherit but a portion of the father's property, the servants become the sole objects of the master's strong affections. Further, the former is but a material gain whereas the latter is spiritual in its content. When Piḷḷai Akalaṅka Brahma Rāyar, the disciple of Kūrattāḻvāṉ, offended, unwittingly though, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the Guru's son, the latter left Śrīraṅgam for Tirukkōṭṭiyūr. Rāyar naturally felt uneasy over this turn of events; in his great anxiety for conciliation with Bhaṭṭārya, Rāyar sought the good offices of one 'Irukai mata vāraṇaṉ', an intimate servant of Bhaṭṭārya, for mediation and despatched him to Tirukkōṭṭiyūr on a peace-mission. With his coaxing eloquence and personal magnetism, the servant, a mere weaver, by caste, so very dear to Lord Raṅganātha and Bhaṭṭārya alike, brought about the change

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of heart in Bhaṭṭārya who deigned to forgive Rāyar. When observers exlaimed that it is only an exemplary servant, who could accomplish such a difficult task, Bhaṭṭārya responded, saying that Vāraṇaṉ was, by his very nature, a born-servant, who could conquer all. So great is the efficacy of service and it is little wonder then that the Lord values it most and lavishes His affections on the devout servants.

āṟā matayāṉai aṭarttavaṉ-taṉṉai
cēṟu ār vayal teṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
nūṟē coṉṉa ōrāyirattuḷ ip pattum
ēṟē tarum vāṉavar-tam iṉ uyirkkē. (IX-4-11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the ten hundreds, sung by Caṭakōpaṉ,
Of Kurukūr with fields fertile, adoring the great one,
Who the elephant in perpetual must had slain,
Will lead the chanters, on to the Lord Supreme,
The chief of the Celestials, unto them very sweet.

Notes

(i) This decad is said to have the power to put the chanters on to the Supreme Lord, the beloved Chief of the 'Nityas' (Eternal Heroes in Heaven.

(ii) Even as the Lord slew the elephant in interminable must, He will destroy our sins of appalling magnitude.

(iii) The fields of Kurukūr provide its inhabitants with copious food while the Āḻvār, the great savant of the place, feeds sumptuously, the 'Mumukṣūs', the seekers of salvation, all over.

(iv) Even as every decad brings into focus a central topic or theme, every Centum stresses a particular aspect of God-head. See aphorism 215 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayam'.

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Ninth Centum—Fifth Decad (IX-5)
(Iṉṉuyirc cēvalum)

Preamble

The Lord pulled the Āḻvār out of his erstwhile dejection, by reminding him of the great felicity, conferred by Him. This refers to the Āḻvār's great role in singing these hymns for the delectation of the devout. The Āḻvār also felt gratified that it was indeed a great gift of the loving Lord and this sustained the Āḻvār for the time being, as we saw in the last decad. But then, in the eighth song of that decad, the Āḻvār referred to his having got the vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa, a by-gone Avatāra (Incarnation). This led him on to the desire for external perception of the Lord as well, without being confined to a mere mental vision. It did not, however, materialise, as the Lord was intent upon rousing the Āḻvār's appetite for Him to still further heights, before He would eventually present Himself physically. Worn out by dejection, due to this seeming desertion by the Lord, the Āḻvār tried to divert his mind by seeking the fellowship of things around, bearing the Lord's likeness. But the very things, chosen for diversion, served only as incentives to remind the Āḻvār, all the more, about the Lord and thus torment him. The Āḻvār's sad predicament in IV-4 is worth recalling, in this context.

In his present love-smitten mood, the Āḻvār is like unto a female-lover, separated from the Lord after their erstwhile union, trying to sustain herself in the sweet environments of a lovely garden. But there, the warbling koel and the blue peacock remind the forlorn lover of the Lord's sweet accents and charming complexion and she at once concludes that the Lord has set these creatures on her, just to make her collapse, pining for Him. She, therefore, asks them why they are at such great pains to put an end to her life which she would as well part with, at her own volition. Even so, the Nāyakī manages to pull through, recounting, in this decad, the Lord's auspicious traits.

Here is an interesting anecdote, revealing how fascinating this decad was for Saint Rāmānuja. Once a misunderstanding arose between him and the temple minstrel-in-chief, Āḻvār Tiruvaraṅkapperumāḷ Araiyar, resulting in the Saint's discontinuance

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of his visits to the Temple of Lord Raṅganātha at Sriraṅgam. The Araiyar, who was anxious to appease Rāmānuja, hit upon a special device whereby the Saint could be brought round and made to visit the temple. News was sent to the Saint that, on a certain day, this particular decad would be featured in the day's service at the temple. Rāmānuja promptly attended the service and peace between him and the Araiyar was thus restored. So great was the hold, this decad had on the Saint.

iṉ uyirc cēvalum nīrum kūvikkoṇṭu iṅku ettaṉai
eṉ uyir nōva miḻaṟṟēlmiṉ, kuyil-pēṭaikāl!
eṉ uyirk kaṇṇa-pirāṉai nīr varak kūvukilīr;
eṉ uyir kūvik koṭuppārkkum ittaṉai vēṇṭumō? (IX–5–1)

Translation

Ye, female Koel-birds, do not my soul torment,
Cooing around here along with your mates dear;
Lord Kaṇṇan, dear unto me like life, You bid not
To come and meet me and yet, why are you in great flutter
To sap my life and unto Him hand it out?

Note

Seeing the female Koel-birds, in the company of their male counterparts, is enough to torment the forlorn lover, that Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī is. If, on the top of this, these birds, well-mated, start cooing their love-notes as well, it would indeed be the farthest limit of forbearance for the desolate Nāyakī. Well, it might be argued that it is not the fault of these birds that they keep cooing, being in their native element. But then, the Nāyakī's grievance is that these birds, given to cooing in sweet accents, did not oblige her by calling out her bosom Lord to come and join her. Verily, these birds are out to sap her life which the Nāyakī is prepared to give up of her own accord and she, therefore, feels that the birds need not make such a mighty effort, to accomplish their object. What they do is like applying heroic remedies for petty maladies, such as breaking an egg with a club.

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ittaṉai vēṇṭuvatu aṉṟu-aṉṟō! aṉṟil-pēṭaikāḷ!
ettaṉai nirum num cēvalum karaintu ēṅkutir?
vittakaṉ, kōvintaṉ, meyyaṉ allaṉ oruvarkkum;
attaṉai ām, iṉi eṉ uyir avaṉ kaiyatē. (IX-5-2)

Translation

Ye, Aṉṟil birds, is it at all meet
That you should with your male partners mate,
Right in front of me and warble my life out?
Alas! Kōvintaṉ, the mystic Lord isn't true to any one,
My life is in His keeping and help I need from none.

Note

The Koel-birds kept silent, in response to the Nâyaki's appeal. Meanwhile, the Kraufica (Aṉṟil) birds started warbling along with their inseparable male partners. The Nâyakī chides them, saying that neither the female nor the male is any better than the Koel-birds and wants to know why they are all out to kill her. The birds tried to beat back the Nâyaki's admonition by pointing out that she should not make all this fuss over her temporary separation from the Lord, seeing that He covets her company so much that He could not bear being away from her for long. In her present state of deep dejection, the Nâyakī is in no mood be believe that the Lord is most easily accessible unto the devout and beyond the reach of others. She reshapes the slogan and avers that He is true to none and is hardly the Universal Saviour, He is believed to be. And yet, He is so enigmatic that He can neither be clung to, as the Saviour nor be given up, as being antagonistic. Either way, her life is in His keeping and, therefore, she does not need the help of these birds or, for the matter of that, of any one else. Actually, the Lord's dispensation, in any form, is always welcome to His true devotees, who have realised their essential nature, as His exclusive vassals, solely dependent on Him. Lord Kṛṣṇa's proverbial mendacity is as wholesome to them as Lord Râma's classical veracity, both being beneficial.

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avaṉ kaiyatē eṉatu ār uyir, aṉṟil-pēṭaikāḷ!
evaṉ colli nīr kuṭaintu āṭutir puṭai cūḻavē?
tavam ceytillā viṉaiyāṭṭiyēṉ uyir iṅku uṇṭō–
evaṉ colli niṟṟum-num ēṅku kūkkural kēṭṭumē? (IX–5–3)

Translation

Know Ye not, Oh, female Aṉṟil birds,
My life is entirely in His hands;
Why do you unto your mates talk love
Within my hearing and pull poor me down?
My life is well on the point of ebbing out,
Alas! the felicity this sinner lacks of keeping it *intact*.
Can I at all subsist even after hearing your love-notes?

Note

The female Krauñca (Aṉṟil) birds, flirting with their males, present a picture entirely different from that of the Nāyakī, sunk deep in dejection. It is only when these birds tasted the bitter fruit of separation from their mates, they would realise the sad plight of the Nāyakī and sympathise with her. It is indeed much more than she can bear, these birds making merry, right in front of her. What is worse, unlike the Lord who wouldn't mind His separation from the Nāyakī, for a while, the Nāyakī has not been endowed with the capacity to put up with even such momentary desertion by her beloved Lord and remain complacent. The Nāyakī feels that her life is ebbing out and that these birds, warbling their love-notes, are hell-bent to take her life out, not knowing that her life is in His hands. Did not the Āḻvār observe, in IV-3-8, "Oh, Lord, You made my soul Yours and Yours mine"?

kūkkural kēṭṭum nam kaṇṇaṉ māyaṉ veḻippaṭāṉ;
mēl kiḻai koḻḻēlmiṉ, nīrum tēvalum, kōḻikāḷ!
vākkum, maṉamum, karumamum namakku āṅkatē;
ākkaiyum āviyum antaram niṉṟu uḻalumē. (IX–5–4)

Translation

Ye, parrots, even Your amorous shouts
Haven't unto me brought Kaṇṇaṉ, our mystic Lord,

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Why then do you still coo so loud from that height?
My word, deed and thought are beside Him sheltered
But left in the lurch, my body and soul struggle a lot.

Note

The Nāyaki wonders why the amorous shouts of these merry birds, which could be heard all over, did not stir up her Lord's emotions, in the same way as she reacted. She admonishes the parrots not to warble any more, in such high pitch and torment her, seeing that their cooings had not evoked the Lord's response. The parrots would not, however, obey the Nāyakī and persisted in shouting. Apprehending that these birds were bent upon teasing her, the Nāyakī disclosed to them that her triple faculties of speech, thought and action had already fled over to the Lord and that the birds would, therefore, do well to shift their scene of activity to where her Lord was. The parrots could not swallow this statement of the Nāyakī, seeing that she was actually talking to them. The Nāyakī clarified that her body and soul were just tottering at this end and that she didn't exist, in the real sense.

antaram niṉṟu uḷḷkiṉṟa yāṉuṭaip pūvaikāl!
num tiṟattu ētum iṭai illai, kuḷaṟēlmiṇō-
intira ñāḷaṅkaḷ kāṭṭi, iv ēḻ ulakum koṇṭa
nam tiru mārpaṉ nam âvi uṇṇa naṉku eṇṇiṉāṉ. (IX-5-5)

Translation

My pet Pūvai birds, You don't have to sing and torment me,
For the Lord, Who on His chest holds Tiru (Mahālakṣmī)
Has indeed planned well ahead to finish me off,
Even as He did the seven worlds get hold of,
Playing many a wily trick (on Mahā bali).

Note

The Nāyakī points out to her pet birds, the futility of their attempts to torment her, as she already stands tormented by her beloved Lord, well set on the path of ending her altogether. In her present state of discomfiture, the

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Nāyakī puts some strange construction on the Lord bearing Mahālakṣmī, His principal Spouse, on His broad chest. This was just to lull the Nāyakī into a sense of false security, by an outward display of His connubial affections. Likewise, she lashes at the Lord, as a downright strategist who seized all the worlds from Mahābali, on the sly. Did He not extend false hopes to her of ever-lasting companionship, during His erstwhile union with her? If this was the ruse, set up by no less than the omni-potent Lord to finish off the Nāyakī, should He need the help of any one else and much less, the help of these tiny birds, to accomplish His task?

naṉku eṉṉi nāṉ vaḷartta ciṟu kiḷip paitalē!
iṉ kural ni miḷaṟṟēl; eṉ ār uyirk kākuttaṉ,
niṉ ceyya vāy okkum vāyaṉ, kaṇṇaṉ, kai kāliṇaṉ,
niṉ pacum cāma niṟattaṉ-kūṭṭuṇṭu niṅkiṉāṉ. (IX-5-6)

Translation

Methought you would unto my aid come in times of need,
And so, my tiny little parrot, You I did lovingly tend;
Sing no more, in my presence, in your tone sweet and remind
Me of Kākuttaṉ, dear as life, of a complexion like yours,
Whose lips are like unto your beak red, whose eyes,
Hands and feet resemble yours, who was in my embrace locked
But has now from me fled, oh, how wicked!

Note

The young parrot, lovingly tended by the Nāyakī and taught by her to spell out the Lord's names, prattles the Lord's names in the Nāyakī's hearing. Poor little thing, it does not know that it hardly suits her, in her present state of mental agony due to her separation from the Lord. Actually, the Lord's names, mouthed by the faithful parrot, just pierce the Nāyakī, like sharp spears, as Nampiḷḷai would put it. The Nāyakī chides the parrot for inflicting such agony on her, like unto the young one attempting to kill the mother. It would, of course, be a different story altogether if the parrot performed likewise when the saint is in the blessed state of communion with the Lord.

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kūṭṭumṭu niṅkiya kōlat tāmaraik kaṇ cevvāy
vāṭṭam il eṉ karumāṇikkam, kaṇṇaṉ, māyaṉpōl
kōṭṭiya villoṭu miṉṉum mēkakkuḻaṅkaḷkāḷ!
kāṭṭelmiṉ num uru-eṉ uyirkku atu kālaṉē. (IX-5-7)

Translation

Ye bunches of clouds with lightning streaks that gleam
Like silvery bows, well bent! show me not your form,
Which unto my life is like Kālaṉ, the angel of Death, one dreads,
For you bear the likeness of Kaṇṇaṉ, my mystic Lord,
Who after His erstwhile union with me has fled,
Whose sapphire hue, lotus eyes and lips red
Are, however, in my thoughts for ever.

Notes

(i) When the silvery lightning cleaves the bosom of the dark clouds, one cannot but recollect the exquisite form of Lord Kṛṣṇa of Sapphire hue, bedecked with dazzling ornaments. The Nāyakī, therefore, asks the clouds not to present themselves to her, as it would prove fatal to her.

(ii) During their erstwhile union, when the Nāyakī and the Lord were locked in tight embrace, it looked as if they would never get parted. But then, the Lord deserted her and, in the process, He stood to gain. Already known for His exquisite charm, each one of His limbs shone with even greater lustre after His union with the Nāyakī. On the other hand, the Nāyakī fared miserably. The Lord's desertion has affected her mind and body so much, that the bangles would not rest on her wrists, grown terribly thin, and her natural complexion has faded out alarmingly, decoloration having set in.

uyirkku atu kālaṉ eṉṟu, ummai yāṉ irantēṟku, nir,
kuyil-paitalkāḷ! kaṇṇaṉ nāmamē kuḷaṟik koṉṟīr;
tayirp paḷaṅ cōṟṟoṭu pāl aṭiciḻum tantu, col
payiṟṟiya nal vaḷam tūṭṭiṉīr!-paṇpu uṭaiyīrē! (IX-5-8)

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Translation

Ye, young Koel-birds, I did entreat you not to utter
The name of Kaṇṇaṉ and put me in a flutter,
And yet, His name You spell and me You do slaughter;
Well, this is how you return my kindness, you I did feed
With curd and rice, cold and cooked with milk, I did also teach
How to utter the Lord's name; how nice of you indeed!

Note

In her present state of desolation, the Nāyakī is in no mood to listen to the Lord's name being chanted by any one and much less, her own pet birds, particularly, the name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Nāyakī reared up the birds with curd, rice and milk and taught them also how to utter the Lord's names, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and so on. A little while ago, the Nāyakī had asked these birds not to utter the name of kṛṣṇa, so dear to her and yet, very bitter in her present state. The name of Rāma, the elixir of life, the Redeemer of even the dead was, however, permitted by her, as it would help to sustain her and pull through The birds, however, pronounced only Kṛṣṇa's name, with a vengeance, the Nāyakī could hardly make out and it is this that she calls massacre, pure and simple. The Nāyakī naturally feels vexed that these birds, on whom she had lavished a lot of affection and attention, should now do her a bad turn

paṇpu uṭai vaṇṭoṭu tumpikāḷ! paṇ miḻaṟṟēlmiṉ;
puṉ-purai vēl kotu kuttāl okkum num iṉ kural—
taṉ peru nīrt taṭam tāmarai malarntāl okkum
kaṇ perum kaṇṇaṉ nam āvi uṇṭu, eḷa naṇṇiṉāṉ. (IX-5-9)

Translation

Ye, humming bees and beetles, Your tone, though sweet,
Is unto me agonising like the spear, driven into the wound straight,;
Right-minded that you are, You shall sing no more;

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Of eyes, large and lovely, like the blooming lotus in the pond,
Kaṇṇaṉ, my Lord, did my life snatch and abscond.

Note

Fed well on the honey gathered from the flowers in bloom, the sonorous bees hum nicely and it would indeed be a treat to the Nāyakī if she were in the company of her beloved Lord. But now, He is not merely away from her but has also stolen away her heart, by exhibiting His exquisite charm, particularly, His large and lovely eyes like unto the lotus, in full-bloom, in a big pond full of cool water. The Nāyakī finds the humming of the bees quite agonising, in her present state, and appeals to their good sense to desist from humming.

eḷa naṇṇi, nāmum nam vāṇa nāṭaṇōtu oṉṟiṇōm—
paḷaṇa nal nāraik kuḷāṅkaḷkāḷ! payiṉṟu eṉ iṉi?
Ḷḷai nalla ākkaiyum paiyavē puyakku aṟṟatu—
taḷai nalla iṉpam talaippeytu eṅkum taḷaikkavē. (IX-5-10)

Translation

Ye, herds of herons, roaming in water-logged fields,
There's no use your conspiring against me any more;
Joined have I my Lord in Heaven, having given up this abode,
This body with jewels bedecked will stay here no more,
May this land prosper and enjoy lasting happiness, all over!

Notes

(i) Seeing a band of herons moving about, the Nāyakī felt that they had assembled together just to hatch a conspiracy against her, with a view to ending her life. She, however, hastened to tell them that there was hardly any need for it, as she had already gained access to the high Heaven. Questioned by the herons as to how she could make such a daring statement, while still in this abode, the Nāyakī enlightens them by asserting that her soul had already ascended Heaven and what they were beholding was only her body which too would fall off, in a day or two.

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(ii) The last line of this song has been interpreted in three different ways by the great Ācāryas: (*a*) According to Saint Yāmunācārya, the great souls, bound for Heaven, would bless, on the eve of their ascent, the people over here, with all joy and prosperity. The Āḻvār just followed in their footsteps, when he made this benedictory statement.

(*b*) Saint Rāmānujācārya, however, thought that the Āḻvār only wished that the worldlings should be spared all the miseries and vicissitudes, gone through by him, soaked in God-love. Ironically speaking, the Āḻvār wished the men of this world, all joy, by keeping their hands off God-love.

(*c*) Parāśara Bhaṭṭārya opined that the people around were moved to pity, on seeing the Āḻvār's sad plight and very much wished that the Lord be pleased to hasten his delivery. But the Āḻvār retorted and told them that they need not commiserate with him any more, as he was at the fag end of his heaven-ward journey, the consummation of his God-love being near at hand and wished them all joy.

iṉpam talaippeytu eṅkum taḻaitta pal ūḻikkut
taṉ pukaḻ ēttat taṉakku aruḷ ceyta māyaṉait
teṉ kurukūrc caṭākōpaṉ col āyiṟattuḷ ivai
oṉpatōṭu oṉṟukkum mūvulakum uṟukumē. (IX–5–11)

Translation

Listeners, in all three worlds, of these songs nine plus one,
Out of the thousand of Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Adoring the Lord, Who the eternal bliss confers, pervading all over,
And did on him His grace sweet shower,
That he might His praise sing till the end of eternity.
Will surely thaw down, however hard-hearted they might be.

Note

It may be recalled that, in the end song of VI-8 also, the benefit accrued by dint of chanting that decad was said to be the

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acquisition of the rare virtue of melting tenderness of heart, making it thaw down like the minute sands in water springs. It is indeed the Lord's grace galore that enables His devotees to sing His inexhaustible glory for all time. Even among these ten songs, the tenth stands on a special footing and is of unique grandeur. That is why the text of this song refers to the ten stanzas, in this decad, as the sum of nine and one, bringing out the grandeur of one stanza vis-a-vis the other nine. In the first nine songs, we saw the Nāyakī struggling to sustain herself through her association with things and creatures bearing the Lord's likeness, while in the tenth, she felt as though life was extinct and what remained was the mere body, ready to fall off.

Ninth Centum—Sixth Decad (IX-6)
(Urukumāl nencam)

Preamble

In the tenth song of the last decad, the Āḻvār's declaration that he had joined his Lord in Heaven and that his physical frame, left behind, would also fall off in a day or two, might make one feel that it marked the end of his stay in this abobe. And yet, the Āḻvār remained inside the hollow of the sacred tamarind tree for quite some time and sang some more of these nectarean hymns. How and what indeed sustained him and kept him on, in this abode? Could it be that the Lord obliged him with His sweet vision and sustained him? No, He did not. It was only the Aḻvār's vivid, rather, absorbing recollection of the immensity of the Lord's love during their erstwhile union, experienced by him in VIII-7, that warmed him up. This is how the contemplation, in retrospect, of her uninterrupted and exclusive enjoyment of Lord Rāmā's sweet company and auspicious traits for twelve long years in the Palace at Ayodhyā, helped to sustain Sita, during her captivity in Lankā. Actually, it is the Supreme Lord, Who, as the Internal Controller, induced this kind of reminiscence and the resultant effervescence of love in the Āḻvār and got, out of him, the further songs of this illuminating hymnal. The illustrious Nampiḷḷai would explain the prolongation of the Āḻvār's stay in this abode even at this crucial stage, as follows:

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(i) The Āḻvār having resolved, as it were, to sustain himself by singing a thousand hymns, as seen from the end-song of each decad, right from the beginning, the Lord is also keen that the Āḻvār keeps it up and helps him indirectly, by not snatching him away earlier;

(ii) The Lord's own eagerness to listen to these thousand songs, in their entirety; and

(iii) It is the great good fortune of the 'Samsārīs', caught up in the vortex of worldly life, that the Āḻvār stays on and continues to feed them with these nectarean hymns.

It is evident that the Lord, enshrined in the pilgrim centre, called Tirukkāṭkarai (in Kerala), kindled in the Āḻvār this kind of reminiscence and made him revert to the mental state, as in VIII-7, seeing that this decad lauds the glory and greatness of that Deity.

urukumāl neñcam uyiriṉ paramaṉṟi;
perukumāl vēṭkaiyum; eṉ ceykēṉ toṇṭaṉēṉ—
teruvu ellām kāvi kamaḻ tirukkāṭkarai
maruviya māyaṉ-taṉ māyam niṉaitoṟē? (IX-6-1)

Translation

What can this doting vassal do, whose love knows no bounds
Unto the mystic Lord, Who in Tirukkāṭkarai resides lovingly,
Whose streets are perfumed with scarlet lily?
As I do His wondrous traits contemplate, my heart thaws down

Note

The Āḻvār wants to know how to stem the on-rush of his God-love and the resultant melting down of his heart, so as to remain steady and stable and enjoy the Lord at Tirukkāṭkarai. But this is next to impossible because he is overwhelmed by the Deity's extra-ordinary love and condescension. The heart is the principal functionary for enjoyment and if it gives way, no enjoyment would be possible, like unto the predicament of a man, launched into a river in spate, whose rubber raft starts leaking, right at the commencement. How can the poor little thing, the Āḻvār's soul, smaller

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than a spec, contain his God-love, full and flooding? The streets of the pilgrim centre are full of fragrance all over, without distinction of main roads and by-roads and lanes and if this is the case with the exterior, what to say of the interior, the Sanctum where the Deity, the very embodiment of fragrance, 'Sarva gandaḥ' as the scriptures put it, stays!

niṉaitoṟum, collumtoṟum, neñcu iṭintu ukum;
viṉaikoḷ cīr pāṭilum, vēm eṉatu ār uyir;
cuṉaikoḷ pūñcōlait teṉ kāṭkarai eṉ appā!
niṉaikilēṉ nāṉ uṉakku āṭceyyum nīrmaiyē. (IX–6–2)

Translation

Oh, Sire, residing in Teṉkātkarai, with many a pond and orchard fine,
As I dote on Your traits auspicious that steal sway my sins,
My heart gives way and when to utter Your glory I begin,
Melts down my mind, my soul would with passion burn
If I your praise did sing, serve You I know not how I can.

Notes

The Lord's tender solicitude for the Āḻvār, His amazing simplicity and astounding love, exhibited in VIII-7, made it appear that the Āḻvār was His sole concern and He literally doted on him. In trying to recollect, in this decad, the extra-ordinary posture of the Lord, the Āḻvār only finds that he is attempting the impossible. His mind was not equal to the task, giving way right at the beginning, like unto the embankment of the river, swept off by the flood waters, leaving no trace of its former existence. Even when the mind is not active and virtually defunct, the tongue would utter the Lord's glory mechanically and these words, trickling down the ears to the region of the heart, would only corrode it still further and disintegrate it. How then could the Āḻvār think of serving the Lord, especially when he is struck dumb and insensate, ruminating over the Lord's erstwhile utterance unto him, "Thee, I shall serve", reversing the normal order of things?

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nīrmaiyāl neñcam vañcittup pukuntu, eṉṉai
irmaiceytu, eṉ uyir āy, eṉ uyir uṇṭāṉ;
cīr malku cōlait teṉ kāṭkarai eṉ appaṉ,
kār mukil vaṇṇaṉ-taṉ kaḷvam aṟikilēṉ. (IX–6–3)

Translation

Methought the Lord got inside me, being my Master,
So as to sustain me, but what was really the matter?
Once inside, He caught me unawares and my mind did shatter
By His simplicity galore, wanting to serve me, His vassal;
The stealthy ways of the cloud-hued Lord, Who does dwell,
In Teṉkāṭkarai, amid lovely gardens, I can't tell.

Note

If only the Āḻvār had a prior knowledge of the Lord's intention to reverse the normal gear and serve him, His born vassal, he would not have allowed Him access to the interior of his heart. Having gained entry, the Lord displayed His amazing simplicity whereby He made the Āḻvār just melt down and dwindle. Having kindled God-love in the Āḻvār, the Lord just devoured him through His all-conquering love.

aṟikilēṉ-taṉṉuḷ aṉaittu ulakum niṟka,
neṟimaiyāl tāṉum avaṟṟuḷ niṟkum pirāṉ,
veṟi kamaḻ cōlait teṉ kāṭkarai eṉ appaṉ,
ciṟiya eṉ ār uyir uṇṭa tiru-aruḷē. (IX–6–4)

Translation

The Lord Supreme does all things and beings sustain
And in them all abides; it is beyond me to ascertain
Why my Sire dwelling in Teṉkāṭkarai, amid fragrant gardens,
Should on this petty soul deign to lavish His affections.

Note

It is indeed incredible that the Lord, higher than whom there is none, should pounce upon a frail being like the Āḻvār, with such avidity. As Nampiḷḷai would put it, the Āḻvār is at a loss to know whether the Lord did so out of love or He was out to kill him with His overwhelming kindness. The Lord

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just grabbed at the Āḻvār, saying that the latter, in his native humility, was not conscious of his greatness.

tiru-aruḷ ceypavaṉ pōla, eṉṉuḷ pukuntu,
uruvamum ār uyirum uṭaṉē uṇṭāṉ—
tiru vaḷar cōlait teṉ kāṭkarai eṉ appaṉ,
karu vaḷar mēṉi eṉ kaṇṇaṉ kaḷvaṅkaḷē! (IX–6–5)

Translation

How stealthy indeed are the ways of the dark-hued Lord!
Kaṇṇaṉ, my Sire, Who in Teṉkāṭkarai dwells amid lovely orchards,
Entered my heart as if to bestow on me His grace
And reclaim me, His vassal, but He did on me pounce,
My body foul and soul dear alike, with delight immense,

Note

The Lord sheds His grace, according to the Āḻvār, when He takes service from him, true to his essential nature. The Āḻvār welcomed the Lord's entry into the interior of his heart, thinking that it would help to sustain his basic stance, as His exclusive vassal from time immemorial. But what actually transpired sent him aghast. Prior to the dawn of true knowledge of his essential nature and his relationship unto the Lord, the Āḻvār mistook his body for the soul and lavished his affections on it (body). But the spiritually regenerated Āḻvār would hate it, as something foul, full of dirt, as set out in the opening song of his very first hymnal (Tiruviruttam). And yet, the Lord, in His unbounded love for the Āḻvār, took to his body also with great relish, making the Āḻvar look on Him with bewildering excitement.

eṉ kaṇṇaṉ kaḷvam eṉakkuc cemmāy niṟkum;
am kaṇṇaṉ uṇṭa eṉ ār uyirk kōtu itu;
puṉkaṇmai eyti, pulampi irāppakal
eṉ kaṇṇaṉ eṉṟu, avaṉ kāṭkarai ēttumē. (IX–6–6)

Translation

Guileless that I am, I fell an easy prey
To the wily overtures of Kaṇṇaṉ, my Lord,

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My soul, by Him sapped, cries out His name, night and day,
And on Kāṭkarai meditates where He does reside.

Note

The Āḻvār, who points the accusing finger at the Lord and calls Him names while in a state of desolation due to separation from Him, sinks all such thoughts, rather, forgets all about them, when the Lord presents Himself before him. Here then is the tantalising charm of the Lord. The Āḻvār took Him at His face value and thoroughly enjoyed his erstwhile union with Him. But when the Lord withdrew Himself from the Āḻvār, the latter was consigned to the bottom-most depths of dejection and felt completely sapped. And yet, he would keep ruminating over His blandishments during their erstwhile union.

kāṭkarai ēttum; aṭaṉuḷ kaṇṇā! eṉṉum;
vēṭkai nōy kūra, niṉaintu, karaintu ukum;
āṭkoḷvāṉ ottu, en uyir uṇṭa māyaṉāl
kōḷ kuṟaipaṭṭatu-eṉ āṟ uyir kōḷ uṇṭē. (IX–6–7)

Translation

The wondrous Lord did my soul consume
After getting inside me, as if to make me His vassal,
And yet, what little remains of my soul does proclaim
The glory of Kāṭkarai and calls Him that therein dwells,
Oh, my Lord Kaṇṇā, love-sick, my soul dwindles
Recounting His ravishing love during our erstwhile union.

Note

Consumed by God-love, the Āḻvār feels that he has been fully consumed by God. Still, he keeps pining for Him and the pilgrim centre where He stands enshrined and this shows that a little bit of his partly eaten-up soul is still lingering. Wonder-struck and overwhelmed indeed is the Āḻvār, that the Omni-scient Lord should dote on a frail being, like him, in this manner.

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kōḷ uṇṭāṉ aṉṟi vantu, eṉ uyir-tāṉ uṇṭāṉ;
nāḷum ṉāḷ vantu, eṉṉai muṟṟavum tāṉ uṇṭāṉ;
kāḷa nīr mēkat teṉ kāṭkarai eṉ appaṟku
āḷ aṉṟē paṭṭatu? eṉ ār uyir paṭṭatē! (IX–6–8)

Translation

There's indeed nothing I could unto the Lord offer
And yet, He did out of His voluntary grace enter
My soul and day by day consumed it, in full;
Should my cloud-hued Lord, Who does in Kāṭkarai dwell,
Afflict thus my soul, simply because I am His vassal?

Notes

(i) Even as the Āḻvār experiences the marvellous communications unfolded unto him from the Lord, an inexhaustible fountain of bliss, ever fresh, the Lord enjoys the Āḻvār with a similar feeling of reciprocity. The Āḻvār says:

(*a*) The Lord lavished His affections on the Āḻvār's soul, purely as a matter of spontaneous grace;

(*b*) The Lord enjoyed the Āḻvār with an avidity which gave one the impression that He had never before come across one, so delicious and

(*c*) The Lord got hold of the Āḻvār, out of His own free-will and sweet grace (Paragata Svīkāra), as distinguished from 'Svagata Svīkāra', (*i.e.*) the Āḻvār courting Him.

(ii) It might be questioned how the all-pervading Lord is said to have feasted on the Āḻvār's soul, smaller than a spec. What the Āḻvār emphasises here is the exuberance of the Lord's love unto the Āḻvār, which makes even his tiny little soul loom large in His eyes. It was just a frugal fare that Vidura provided for Lord Kṛṣṇa and Yet, He ate it with such great relish that it looked like a number of courses, as indicated by the plural phraseology, 'Vidurānnādhi', in the text.

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(iii) What precisely does the Āḻvār refer to, when he says that his soul is afflicted ? It is sheer God-enjoyment, the rapturous contemplation of His auspicious attributes, transporting the Āḻvar to the realm of ecstasy, where one can hardly remain steady and stable. It is indeed a unique experience, very different from that of the ungodly, pitted against the Lord and smitten by His unrelenting arrows; the former is the region of the mind while the latter is purely physical.

ār uyir paṭṭatu, eṉatu uyir paṭṭatu—
pēr itaḻt tāmaraik kaṇ kaṉi vāyatu ōr
kār eḻil mēkat teṉ kāṭkarai kōyil koḷ
cīr eḻil nāl taṭam tōḷ teyvavārikkē? (IX–6–9)

Translation

Is there yet another soul like mine, smitten by love
Unto the Lord of charm exquisite, with shoulders four,
Lotus eyes, large and lovely, red lips and Form of beauty galore,
Like unto dark clouds lovely, a delectable ocean unto the gods above,
Who has in Teṉkāṭkarai, taken up His abode?

Note

To a question, supposed to have been put to the Āḻvār, as to whether all those engrossed with the Lord's attributes are not in the same plight as he and why he should make much ado about it, this is the Āḻvār's reply. He avers that even the 'Nitya Sūris' in Heaven, the Eternal Angels, known for their deep absorption in the Lord's auspicious traits and incessant communion with Him do not suffer from an infatuation of this kind. The Lord's delicious Form has brought on this devastation of the Āḻvār's soul, enthralled by His bewitching eyes and coral lips. The Lord is the ocean which gave birth to a host of things including the minor deities (Celestials).

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vārikkoṇṭu uṉṉai viḻuṅkuvaṉ kāṇil enru
ārvu uṟṟa eṉṉai oḻiya, eṉṉil muṉṉam
pāri.tut tāṉ eṉṉai muṟṟap paṟukiṉāṉ;
kār okkum kāṭkarai appaṉ-kaṭiyaṉē. (IX–6–10)

Translation

Eager I was indeed to gather the Lord up and devour
If Him I could only behold but my cloud-hued Sire,
Ever alert, Who in Kāṭkarai has taken abode,
Did consume me, in full, going well ahead.

Note

It can be firmly asserted that this song is indeed the very cream of the entire hymnal, yielding, as it does, the grand thesis that attainment of the individual soul is the Lord's great gain. This incidentally sets at naught the oft-debated concept of the individual gaining the Lord and striving to that end. In the 'Song Celestial', Lord Kṛṣṇa said, in a tone of frustration, that the Saint who looked upon Him, as All-in-one, the great Redeemer and Sole Sustainer, was scarce indeed. The Lord was looking for one such but couldn't get hold of any. Barely six weeks after He went to the Celestium, Nammāḻvār, answering to this description, came into this world. The Āḻvār was consumed by God-love, too deep for words. But the Lord forestalled him, being ever alert and consumed him with His all-conquering love, proving more than a match for the Āḻvār. The Lord had indeed made herculean efforts to reclaim the Āḻvār and little wonder then, that He literally pounced upon him, after having kindled in him God-love of such great magnitude.

kaṭiyaṉāyk kaṉcaṉaik koṟṟa pirāṉ-taṉṉai
koṭi matiḻ teṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ col
vaṭivu amai āyirattu ip pattiṉāl caṉmam
muṭivu eyti nācam kāṇṭirkaḷ em kāṉalē. (IX–6–11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the comely thousand of Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Adoring the Benefactor great, Who to slay Kaṉcaṉ did hasten,

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Will unto the chanters ensure the destruction
Of the mirage [of Samsāra] and halt the recurrence of birth.

Note

The chanters of this decad, it is claimed, will get the terrific cycle of birth and rebirth halted, by cutting out the bondage of Samsāra, the root-cause of the dreadful succession of lives. The family ties and sensual pleasures breed empty and worthless desires and running after them is just as futile and meaningless as trying to quench one's thirst, mistaking the mirage for a running brook.

Ninth Centum—Seventh Decad (IX-7)
(Eṉ Kāṉal Akam)

Preamble

The Āḻvār sustained himself, in a way, by contemplating the Lord's auspicious traits, as in the last decad. In the process, he, however, developed a deep yearning for direct perception of the Lord. This led him on to send emissaries to the Lord to come down and grace him with His presence. And now, here is the last of the four decads in which messages were sent to the Lord by the Āḻvār, figuratively transformed as a forlorn female lover, the other three being I-4, VI-1 and VI-8. It may be recalled that the destinations of the messages sent to the Lord in the earlier decads, were the Milk-ocean, where the Lord stays in His 'Vyuha' form, the seat of creative activity, His incarnate forms and His transcendental Form in Heaven as well as His 'Antaryāmi' or hidden Form, as the Internal Controller. The traits of the Lord, which held out a special fascination to the Nāyakī, while sending those messages, were, Forgiveness, His creed or pledge to extend protection to His devotees and His feeling of oneness with His devotees (aikarasya) (*i.e.*) sense of identity with them and deep compassion. The message, as in this decad, is, however, addressed to the Lord in His 'Arca' (Iconic, worshippable) form, the special accent being on His enchanting beauty. Vide aphorism 156 of 'Ācārya Hrudayam. Put briefly, the message in this decad, to be conveyed by the birds to the Lord, is: "Oh, Sire, enshrined as You are in Tirumūḻikkaḷam (a pilgrim centre in Kerala state), You seem to

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have got completely absorbed in the company of Your consorts and proximate attendants, to the exclusion of poor Parâṅkuśa Nâyakî. Alas! the Nâyakî, enthralled by Your exquisite beauty, can hardly brook separation from You any longer. Please take note of this fact and hasten to her ".

em kāṉal akam kaḻivāy irai tērntu, iṅku iṟitu amarum
ceṅkāla maṭa nārāy! tirumūḻikkaḷattu uṟaiyum
kcṅku ār pūn ṭuḻāy muṭi em kuṭakkūttarkku eṉ tūtāy,
num kālkaḷ eṉ talaimēl keḻumīro, numarōṭṭē. (IX–7–1)

Translation

Ye, red-legged stork lovely, that loiters in our garden canal,
In search of food, may you go on an errand
To my Lord in Tirumūḻikkaḷam, the pot-dancer grand,
Wearing on His crown honey-studded tuḻaci garland
And my head bedeck, on your return,
With your (weary) legs, along with your kin.

Notes

(i) The birds, ostensibly employed by the Āḻvār to convey his message to the Lord at Tirumūḻikkaḷam, symbolise the great preceptors. This has been clearly brought out in this opening song where the Āḻvār wants the birds to place their legs on his head, which, if taken literally, would not make much sense. The invocation is, therefore, to the illustrious Ācāryas to shed their grace on the Āḻvār by placing their legs on his head. c.f. Tiruviruttam—54, where the Āḻvār sought the good offices of the bees to put him on to the impeccable lotus feet of the Lord of the Celestials. It is evident that the bees in question denote none but the competent preceptors, who ensure our attainment of the Lord.

(ii) *Our garden Canal*: Possessivity, that is, " My-ness ", sense of ownership should, in general, be eschewed and yet, it is indeed wholesome and welcome, when it is invoked for the benefit of others, and not for one's own selfish ends. It is the Nâyakî's garden where the birds lovingly loiter and this link with them helps her to

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commission them to carry her message to the Lord, by way of making Him aware of her parlous state. The birds are near at hand, in the Nāyakī's garden, instead of her having to go in search of them; this is indeed a great boon, comparable to Mahāpūrṇar, the preceptor of Śrī Rāmānuja, staying in the latter's house and imparting religious instructions.

(iii) *Storks with legs, red and lovely*: The storks denote the Ācāryas, as set out in (1) above, and it is but appropriate that their legs, the very haven of the disciple, are alluded to in such endearing terms.

numarōṭum piriyātē, nīrum num cēvaḷumāy
amar kātal kuruku iṉaṅkāḷ! aṇi mūḷikkaḷattu uṟaiyum,
emarālum paḷippuṇṭu, iṅku eṉ-tammāl iḷippuṇṭu?
tamarōtu aṅku uṟaivārkkut takkilamē? kēḷīrē! (IX-7-2)

Translation

Ye, herds of herons, moving with your mates inseparable,
Better go and enquire of the Lord who dwells
In Tirumūḷikkaḷam, whether I, by Him despised,
And for that reason, by my kith and kin accused,
Won't be good company for those that on Him attend;
'Tis no use prolonging my agony, let me my life end.

Notes

(i) The Lord stays in Tirumūḷikkaḷam, attended upon by a large number of devotees and it is but natural that the Nāyakī also longs to be in such good company. Her emissaries, the birds, are also merry, enjoying connubial bliss, and moving about in their flocks and it is only appropriate that the Nāyakī invokes their aid to cure her of her solitude and restore her to the Lord's company in that glorious setting. Indeed, it behoves the affluent, far above wants, to feed the hungry and lift them from the pangs of hunger!

(ii) The Nāyakī feels that she is in an unenviable predicament and it would indeed be just as well that she ceased to

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exist. The Lord and she had been locked up, in union, only to be deserted by Him. This gave her kith and kin the handle to give her up and so, she is neither here nor there. There is, of course, no reason why the Lord should give her up and she suspects that the Lord has just forgotten her, absorbed that He is in the sweet company of His devotees, gathered in that holy centre. The birds in question are now required to remind Him of the lonely existence of the Nāyakī, at this end and the imperative need for His admitting her also into His fold over there.

takkilamē? kēḷirkaḷ-taṭam puṉalvāy irai tērum
kokku iṉaṅkāḷ! kuruku iṉaṅkāḷ! kuḷirmūḷikkaḷattu uṟaiyum
cekkamalattu alar pōlum kaṇ, kai, kāl, ceṅkaṉi vāy—
ak kamalattu ilai pōlum tirumēṉi-aṭikaḷukkē. (IX–7–3)

Translation

Ye, flocks of cranes and herons, your food you seek
In the big ponds over here, better go to cool Mūḷikkaḷam and ask
The Lord whose eyes, hands and feet and the red lotus are alike,
Whose lips are like a red fruit and whose complexion does match
The lotus leaf, whether unto Him I won't be a match.

Notes

(i) In each of the four decads, where the Nāyakī despatched messages to her Lord, there is one song, considered to be the very cream of that decad. And now, here is the topical song of this decad. Apprehending that the Lord is totally absorbed in the sweet company of the devotees surrounding Him at Tirumūḷikkaḷam, forgetting all about the Nāyakī, she now wants these birds to remind Him of how she got enthralled by His exquisite charm, reducing her to her present state. The Lord would seem to be oblivious of His own enthralling beauty which had brought on the Nāyakī's infatuation to such a high pitch that she can't brook

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separation from Him, any longer. So then, the Nāyakī deems it fit to remind the Lord, through these birds, of His own ravishing beauty and the magic spell it has cast on the Nāyakī, in particular. It is this special feature that characterises this decad. See also the preamble to this decad, where it has been set out that the Lord's enchanting charm, in His iconic Form, is the source of inspiration for the Nāyakī's message conveyed through these birds.

(ii) The Nāyakī, according to Nampiḷḷai, wants these birds to ascertain from the Lord whether He has at all any fascination for her. If the reply be in the affirmative, she would try her best to hold on to her life; if otherwise, she would seek some means to put an end to her life, even as Sītā, in captivity, made a desperate bid to strangle herself with her long locks.

(iii) The Lord's complexion is compared to the lotus leaf. See also the Śloka in Rāmāyaṇa which affirms this: 'tam padmadala patrākṣam'. The word 'akṣam'. refers both to the eye and the body, the former is compaable to the lotus petals and the latter to the lotus leaf.

tirumēṉi aṭikaḷukkut tīviṉaiyēṉ viṭu tūtāy,
tirumūḻikkaḷam eṉṉum ceḻu nakarvāy aṉi mukilkāḷ!
tirumēṉi avaṭku aruḷir eṉṟakkāl, ummait taṉ
tirumēṉi oḷi akaṟṟi, teḷi vicumpu kaṭiyumē? (IX–7–4)

Translation

Ye, pretty clouds, were you to run an errand
On behalf of this sinner unto my Master of form grand,
Who does in holy Tirumūḻikkaḷam dwell
And a word unto Him tell
That He should unto me offer His body gracious,
Do you fear that you He would punish,
Put you off colour and out of the clear sky push?

Notes

(i) *My Master of form grand*: His auspicious traits and wondrous deeds apart, the Lord's enchanting Form is

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such as to enthral one and all, including the ungodly. Duryodhan and his men were studiously determined not to get up from their seats and extend any courtesy whatsoever to Lord Kṛṣṇa when He arrived at the royal court, as the errand boy of the Pāṇḍavās. But, as soon as the Lord entered the court, all of them, including the deadly Duryodhan, stood up automatically, entranced by the unique halo and splendour of His enchanting Form.

(ii) Sinner though, the Nāyakī deems it her great good fortune to fall at the feet of these birds, the Lord's devotees and to beg of them to tell the Lord in Tirumūḻikkaḷam, "Here is the Nāyakī languishing for you inside the hollow of the holy tamarind tree at Āḻvār Tirunakari." She exhorts the clouds not to apprehend any punishment for this, at the hands of the Lord, by way of pushing them out of the clear sky and depriving them of their lovely hue. On the other hand, the Lord will impart to them still greater lustre.

teḻi vicumpu kaṭitu ōṭi, ti vaḷaittu, miṉ ilakum
oḷi mukilkāḷ! tirumūḻikkaḷattu uṟaiyum eṉcuṭarkku,
teḻi vicumpu tirunāṭāṭ tiviṉaiyēṉ maṉattu uṟaiyum
tuḻi vār kaḷ kuḷalārkku, eṉ tūtu uraittal ceppumiṉē. (IX-7-5)

Translation

Ye, lovely clouds, speeding across the immaculate sky,
Holding in your bosom, lightning like unto the arc fiery!
Convey my message, will you unto the Lord resplendent,
Who is in Tirumūḻikkaḷam resident,
Whose locks shed honey in plenty and Who in this sinner's heart dwells
With all the affection He bestows on the heaven impeccable.

Notes

(i) Seeing that the clouds were rather diffident of being heard by the Lord, the Nāyakī assures them of positive response by the Lord. The Nāyakī's confidence stemmed

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from the fact that the Lord got Himself lodged in her heart with all the affection He bestows on His transcendent abode, called Heaven.

(ii) The lightning appears in the clouds only when they are about to rain. The rain clouds, referred to, in this song, however, denote the great preceptors, resplendent like the Lord Himself, showering knowledge on the disciples, all over.

(iii) *This Sinner's heart*: The sin, alluded to, is the Nāyakī's inability to envision the Lord, although He is very much in her heart. One Ciṟṟāḷkoṇṭāṉ would say: "It is indeed a long distance between the actual realisation of God and the mere inward mental conception of the Lord. To aspire for the former, right when God-love blooms in one's heart, is like opening a cloth-shop and announcing to the public that clothes are ready for sale while the cotton for these clothes is still lying raw in its pods on the tree." [As the Englishman would put it this is like attempting to sell the lion-skin even before the lion is hunted].

(iv) *Convey my message*: The message from one, on whose locks the flower has dried down to a mere shred, to Him whose, locks are bedecked with flowers, shedding honey profusely.

tūtu uraittal ceppumiṉkaḷ-tū moḻi vāy vaṇṭu iṉaṅkāḷ!
pōtu iraittu, matu nukarum poḻil mūḻikkaḷattu uṟaiyum
mātarait tam mārvakattē vaittārkku eṉ vāy-māṟṟam
tūtu uraittal cepputirēl, cuṭar vaḷaiyum kalaiyumē (IX–7–6)

Translation

Ye, sweet-sounding bees, if you would unto my Lord fly down,
Who the Divine Mother bears on His winsome chest and goes gay,
Residing in Tirumūḻikkaḷam, full of flower gardens,

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Shedding honey in plenty and unto Him my oral message convey,
My saree and bangles I shall indeed regain.

Notes

(i) The *Sweet-sounding* bees typify the Ācāryas who can win over the Lord through their *persuasive eloquence*.

(ii) The Nāyakī does not even want the bees to come back and tell her what the Lord has to say in reply to her message. It would indeed be sufficient if they just conveyed her message to the Lord who is her avowed Saviour, pledged to protect her. What is even more assuring to the Nāyakī is the effective intercession and purposeful pleading of Śrī Mahālakṣmī, on behalf of the Nāyakī. All that the bees have got to do is to go to Tirumūḷikkaḷam, where the flower gardens yield plenty of food (honey) for them and incidentally tell the Lord about her in the immediate presence of Lakṣmī. In that propitious setting, the Nāyakī is quite sanguine of the result, namely, the restoration of the Lord to her and that would mean, she will, once again, don her saree all right and the bangles will also rest well on her wrist.

cuṭar vaḷaiyum kalaiyum koṇṭu, aruviṉaiyēṉ tōḷ tuṟanta
paṭar pukaḻān, tirumūḷikkaḷattu uṟaiyum paṅkayakkaṇ
cuṭar pavaḷa vāyaṉaik kaṇṭu, orunāḷ ōr tūy māṟṟam
paṭar poḷilvāyk kuruku iṉaṅkāḷ! eṉakku oṉṟu paṇiyīrē.
(IX-7-7)

Translation

Ye, Koel birds that in this spacious garden dwell,
For my sake, a good word you have one day to tell
Unto my lotus-eyed Lord, with lovely lips like the coral red,
Of wide-spread fame, Who does in Tirumūḷikkaḷam reside,
Who this fell sinner's shoulders deserted,
Taking away my beaming bangles and saree as well.

Note

The Nāyakī, in her present state of separation after the erstwhile union with her Lord, is literally denuded of her feminity

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which the bangles and saree denote. She wants these birds to go and tell the enchanting Lord at Tirumūḻikkaḷam that it was next to impossible for her to be apart from Him, of exquisite beauty, having tasted the bliss earlier.

eṉakku oṉṟu paṇiyiṟkaḷ-irum poḻilvāy irai tērntu,
maṉakku iṉpam paṭa mēvum vaṇṭiṉaṅkāḷ! tumpikāḷ!
kaṉakkoḷ tiṇ matiḷ puṭai cūḻ tirumūḻikkaḷattu uṟaiyum
puṉakkoḷ kāyā mēṉip pūn tuḻāy muṭiyārkkē. (IX-7-8)

Translation

Ye, bees and beetles, moving in pleasant company
In these spacious gardens, in search of honey,
For me put in a word unto my Lord, sporting tuḷaci lovely
On His crown, of the complexion of the blue lily,
Who does in Tirumūḻikkaḷam dwell,
Surrounded by walls, tough and tall.

Note

The Nāyakī says, there is no use of these bees and beetles making merry in the company of their mates, gathering honey, without making her also happy. She, therefore, beckons them to go and tell the Lord in that holy centre, well fortified, how she longs to behold His exquisite Form. Here, at this end, the Nāyakī is in a precarious condition, while, at the other end, the Lord stands pledged to redeem the devout seeking His protection.

pūn tuḻāy muṭiyārkku, poṉ āḻik kaiyārukku,
ēntu nīr iḻam kurukē! tirumūḻik kaḷattārukku,
ēntu pūṇ mulai payantu, eṉ iṉai malark kaṇ nīr tatumpa,
tām tammaikkoṇṭu akaltal takavu aṉṟu eṉṟu uraiyīṟē.
(IX-7-9)

Translation

Ye, tiny heron, strutting gaily in the waters, go and tell
Unto my Lord who does in Tirumūḻikkaḷam dwell,
Holding the discus lovely and sporting tuḷaci on His crown
'Tis hardly fair that He should have from me gone,

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Taking His body along, making my flowery eyes water down
And my breasts bedecked, lose their lustre fine.

Note

The Nāyakī is so much obsessed with the Lord's exquisite charm that she feels, it was hardly fair of Him to have got away from her, after their erstwhile union, without leaving His body behind! Ludicrous it might seem but it goes to convey that the Nāyakī just cannot bear being apart from the Lord, even for a split second.

takavu aṉṟu eṉṟu uraiyiṟkaḷ-taṭam puṉalvāy irai tēṛntu,
mika iṉpam paṭa mēvum melnaṭaiya aṉṉaṅkāḷ!
mika mēṉi melivu eyti, mōkalaiyum īṭu aḻintu, eṉ
akamēṉi oḻiyāmē, tirumūḻikkaḷattārkkē. (IX-7-10)

Translation

Ye, swans of gentle gait, moving along merrily in fields fertile,
In search of food, unto the Lord in Tirumūḻikkaḷam go and tell,
'Tis hardly fair that He should despise me; only then,
My body, the saree thereon and my inner soul I can retain.

Note

The great Ācāryas, who go about delving and gathering the most delicious meanings, the scriptural texts can possibly yield, are referred to here, as the swans, endowed with the special faculty of picking up milk from a mixture of milk and water. The Nāyakī's appeal to the Lord's special trait of mercy is bound to go home to Him, as He cannot afford to risk His reputation, as the All-merciful, No doubt, the Lord's infinite mercy can never be exhausted even as the oceanic waters can never go dry. And yet, what is now sought to be pointed out by the Nāyakī is that His keeping aloof of her is by-no-means consistent with His great quality of mercy and cannot be deemed to be a happy trend, in this context.

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oḷivu iṟṟit tirumūḷikkaḷattu uṟaiyum oṉcuṭarai
oḷivu illā aṇi maḷaḷaik kiḷimoḷiyāḷ aḷaṟṟiya col
vaḷu illā vaṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ vāyntu uraitta
aḷivu illā āyirattu ip pattum nōy aṟukkumē. (IX-7-11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the eternal thousand, uttered by Caṭakōpaṉ,
Of Kurukūr, soaked in God-love impeccable,
Voicing forth the sweet-tongued Nāyakī's pangs of separation
From the resplendent Lord Who does, for ever, in Tirumūḷikkaḷam dwell,
Will the fell malady, the bondage of samsāra dispel.

Note

This decad will cut out the bondage of its chanters, the worldly ties, which operate as an impediment to the attainment of God-head. In other words, this decad cures the malady of separation from the Lord and the resultant state of desolation.

The resplendent Lord, in His iconic manifestation in Tirumūḷikkaḷam, is the Doctor who stays on permanently in our midst, determined to cure the malady of 'samsāra' of the devout seekers.

Ninth Centum—Eighth Decad (IX-8)
(Aṟukkum vinaiyāyiṉa)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Saint despatched several messengers to the Lord at Tirumūḷikkaḷam and yet, he could hardly contain the effervescence of God-love in him. He could not patiently await the return of the emissaries from the Lord and so, he tried to sustain himself by meeting the Lord enshrined in Tirunāvāy (another pilgrim centre in Kerala State, the number of such pilgrim centres in that State adding up to thirteen.) But, in his present state of desolation and debility, he could not make the trip to that pilgrim centre. The next best he could do was, therefore, to meditate on the Lord at Tirunāvāy, right from where he was. This is precisely what he does, in this decad. As Nampiḷḷai puts it, the Āḻvār was now

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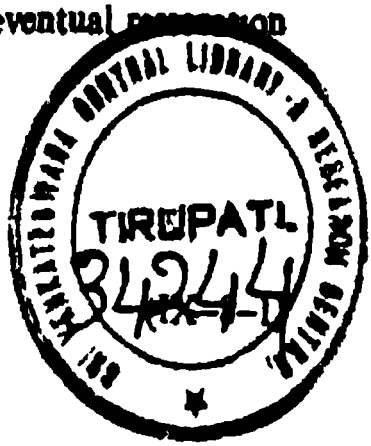
in the same mental state as Sītā was, during the period intervening Hanumān's visit to her in Aśokavana and her eventual [illegible] to Lord Rāma.



aṟukkum viṉaiyāyiṉa-ākattu avaṉai
niṟuttum maṉattu oṉṟiya cintaiyiṉārkku;
veṟit taṇ malarc cōlaikaḷ cūḻ tirunāvāy
kuṟukkum vakai uṇṭuk‹ lō-koṭiyēṟkē?

Translation

Can this fell sinner by any means draw near
Tirunāvāy, full of flower gardens, cool and fragrant,
Which roots out the ills of those, greatly intent
On retaining the Lord, [that great Nectar],
In their minds, with devotion unique?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār wants to know the means by which he could abridge the distance between him and the pilgrim centre, called Tirunāvāy.

(ii) The ills, referred to here, are of three distinct types, namely, (i) those which obstruct the path of knowledge of the essential nature of the individual soul (Svarūpa virodhi); (ii) those, which stand in the way of practising the means for attaining salvation (e.g.) not beseeching His redemptive grace but pinning all faith on one's own self and resorting to self-protection (Upāya virodhi) and (iii) those, which hinder the final bliss in the yonder state (e.g.) rendering service unto the Lord in the final state in Heaven, with the egoistic tinge of self-enjoyment, without resigning, *in toto*, to His grace and pleasure (Upeya virodhi). Even if this Pilgrim Centre did not cut out all these ills and evils, it was by itself a very attractive place from which one could hardly lift one's mind.

koṭi ēr iṭaik kōkaṉakattaḷ kēḷvaṉ,
vaṭi vēl taṭam kaṇ maṭap piṉṉai maṇāḷaṉ,
neṭiyāṉ uṟai cōḻaikaḷ cūḻ tirunāvāy
aṭiyēṉ aṉukappeṟum nāḷ evaikolō? (IX-8-2)

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Translation

When shall this vassal gain access to Tirunāvāy amid orchards fine,
Where dwells the Lord Supreme, the Consort Divine
Of lovely Piṉṉai, with large eyes like unto a spear,
The favourite of (Lakṣmi,) the lotus-born with waist akin to a creeper?

Note

Here are two great intercessors of proven efficiency, Lakṣmi, the thin-waisted and Nappiṉṉai, with lovely eyes, the two Divine Spouses in the Lord's immediate presence. No wonder then, the Āḻvār is eager to drive home the advantage and gain access to the Lord, in this highly propitious setting.

evaikol aṉukap peṟum nāḷ eṉṟu, eppōtum,
kavaiyil maṉam iṉṟi, kaṇṇīrkaḷ kaluḻvaṉ;
navai il tirunāraṇaṉ cēr tirunāvāy
avaiyuḷ pukalāvatu ōr nāḷ aṟiyēṉē. (IX–8–3)

Translation

With a mind unto Him solely rivetted
And tears rolling down my eyes, I do await
The day I'd gain access to Tirunāraṇaṉ, the immaculate,
In that assembly grand at Tirunāvāy the day appropriate,
When I shall that gathering enter, I know not.

Note

" Which is that day when I shall join the august assembly, presided over by Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, at Tirunāvāy?" the Āḻvār revolves in his mind, with single-minded devotion, tears flooding his eyes. Should he forego this supreme advantage, even when the Lord has deigned to make Himself visible and stay near at hand, in Tirunāvāy?

nāḷāl aṟiyēṉ eṉakku uḷḷaṇa; nāṉum
miḷā aṭimaippaṇi ceyyap pukuntēṉ;
niḻ ār malarc cōlaikaḷ cūḻ tirunāvāy
vāḻ ēy taṭam kaṇ maṭap piṉṉai maṇāḷā! (IX–8–4)

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Translation

Oh, dear Consort of Piṉṉai, with large eyes, spear-like,
Unto you, staying in Tirunāvāy, amid flower gardens grand
This vassal longs to render service without break,
I know not, however, when you will my desire grant.

Notes

The Āḻvār longs to render service unto the Lord, all the time, even as the 'Nitya Sūris', the Eternal Heroes in Heaven do. In near-by Tirunāvāy, the Lord stays in the coveted company of Goddess Nappiṉṉai, amid gardens yielding plenty of fragrant flowers for the worship of the Divine Couple. And yet, the Āḻvār knows not how long he will have to languish without rendering the Divine Service, longed for by him, and when exactly the Lord will enlist him in His service.

There are frequent references, in this decad, to the Divine Mother. Nampiḷḷai's admirable elucidation of this position is as follows:

"The sojourner, who is heading towards his home town, after years of wandering, keeps thinking of his mother and kith and kin, quite often. Even so, the Āḻvār, who is nearing the end of his journey to Heaven, the Eternal Land, keeps ruminating over the Divine Mother and the grand assembly of devotees over there."

maṇāḷaṉ, malar maṅkaikkum maṇmaṭantaikkum;
kaṇṇāḷaṉ ulakattu uyir, tēvarkaṭku ellām;
viṇṇāḷaṉ virumpi uṟaiyum tirunāvāy
kaṇ āṟak kaḻikkiṉṟatu iṅku eṉṟukol, kaṇṭē? (IX-8-5)

Translation

When indeed shall I my eyes feast, right here,
On the Lord Supreme, Who in Tirunāvāy lovingly stays,
The Spouse of (Lakṣmi) the lotus-born and Mother Earth,
The Ordainer of Heaven and Earth, Who in Heaven holds sway?

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Note

The Lord, Who holds durbar in Heaven, seated on His serpent couch, in the grand assembly of the Celestials, has come down to Tirunāvāy and made it His abode with great delight. The Āḻvār longs to behold the Lord in Tirunāvāy, all the time, feasting his eyes on His nectarean charm.

kaṇṭē kaḻikkiṉṟatu iṅku eṉṟukol kaṇkaḷ-
toṇṭē uṉakkāy oḻintēṉ, turicu iṉṟi;
vaṇṭu ār malarc cōlaikaḷ cūḻ tirunāvāy
koṇṭē uṟaikiṉṟa em kōvalar kōvē? (IX-8-6)

Translation

Oh, Chief of Cowherds, my Lord, You do lovingly stay
In Tirunāvāy, full of flower gardens, where bees go gay,
When shall I, Your selfless vassal, feast my eyes indeed
On Your Form exquisite, here, in this holy land?

Note

" Let the hunger of my eyes be appeased even if mine is not ", says the Āḻvār, who longs for the Lord's presence, with such great intensity. The Āḻvār is the blemishless vassal of the Lord, catering solely to His delight, without the slightest tinge of selfishness and he is thus a legitimate aspirant, the worthy recipient of the bliss in question.

kō ākiya māvaliyai nilam koṇṭāy!
tēvācuram ceṟṟavaṉē! tirumālē!
nāvāy uṟaikiṉṟa eṉ nāraṇa nampī!
āā! aṭiyāṉ ivaṉ eṉṟu aruḷāyē. (IX-8-7)

Translation

Nāraṇaṉ, my Benefactor great, Who in Nāvāy dwells,
Oh, Tirumāl, Who did the Asuras quell
In their fray with Devas! You did from Māvali beg
And wrest the land whereof he thought he was the master big;

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" Ha! here is My vassal ", you should cognise
And on me bestow your grace spontaneous.

Note

'Tirumâl' denotes the Lord in conjunction with Srî Mahâ Lakṣmî, highly conducive to the protection of the devout, routing their enemies and other impediments in the way of their attainment of God. It is against this favourable background that the Āḻvâr beseeches the Lord's grace. The Lord had installed Indrâ, as the Sovereign Lord of all the three worlds but Mahâ Bali seized them from Indrâ by force and proclaimed himself the master. Lord Mahâ Viṣṇu set matters right, dexterously, by exploiting Bali's avowed munificence.

aruḷātu oḷivāy; aruḷceytu, aṭiyēṉaip
poruḷākki, uṉ poṉ aṭik kīḻp puka vaippāy—
maruḷē iṉṟi, uṉṉai eṉ nēñcattu iruttum
teruḷē taru teṉ tirunāvāy eṉ tēvē! (IX–8–8)

Translation

My Sire, in Tirunâvây enshrined, grant me wisdom clear
To lodge You firmly in my heart, with no inkling whatever
Of nescience in me, albeit You shed not Your grace on me
Nor deign to shelter me under Your feet lovely.

Note

Right at the beginning of this hymnal, it was elucidated that the Āḻvār was endowed by the Lord Himself, with clear-cut knowledge, full and complete, shorn of all discrepancies and deviations, doubt and despair. What is now prayed for is preservation of the clarity, already endowed, rather its stabilisation. Be he near or far from Him physically, mental proximity with the Lord, at all times and under all circumstances, is prayed for by the Āḻvār. While this is the interpretation of this song, by all the other glossators, Piḷḷāṉ has held this song to mean:

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" My Lord, in the exercise of your sweet, spontaneous grace, you rid me of nescience, *in toto*, and dowered on me full and complete knowledge about your greatness and grandeur. It is, again, purely a matter of your grace, either way, whether or not you shelter me under your lovely feet, in due recognition of the fact that here I am, your vassal, intent upon rendering self-less service unto you ".

tēvar muṉivarkku eṉṟum kāṇṭaṟku ariyaṉ;
mūvar mutalvaṉ; oru mūvulaku āḷi;
tēvaṉ virumpi uṟaiyum tirunāvāy
yāvar aṇukap peṟuvār iṉi?-antō! (IX-8-9)

Translation

Alas! after I am dead and gone
Who shall be the lucky one
Who can unto Tirunāvāy access gain,
Where stays lovingly the Lord Supreme Who does ordain
All the worlds and Piramaṉ, Civaṉ and Intiraṉ sustain,
Whom the sages and Celestials cannot without His grace attain?

Note

The Āḻvār wonders who indeed shall be lucky to achieve his ambition of enjoying, at close quarters, the lovely Lord at Tirunāvāy, once he gave up his body without realising it. Going to Tirunāvāy should not be taken literally and it should not be questioned what precludes one from reaching it. What the Saint actually aspires for is the Eternal Land (Heaven), the transcendent abode of the Lord, enshrined in Tirunāvāy, the first and foremost, the great ordainer of the worlds and the exalted Celestials.

antō! aṇukap perum nāḷ eṉṟu, eppōtum
cintai kalaṅkit tirumāl! eṉṟu alaippaṉ;
koṇṭu ār malarc cōlaikaḷ cūḻ tirunāvāy
vaṇṭē uṟaikiṉṟa em mā maṇi vaṇṇā! (IX-8-10)

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Translation

My Lord of sapphire hue! You left Your heavenly abode
And came down to Tirunāvāy, full of gardens where grow
Flowers in bunches fine; with a mind agitated, I do call,
Oh, Tirumāl, all the time, alas! will I join you at all?

Note

It is a love-intoxicated mind that gets agitated and, therefore, lacks clarity; it persists in calling Him repeatedly, even when there is no response from the other end, like unto the children, in their great ardour, calling their parents even when they are not near at hand. This is accentuated by the fact that the Lord has condescended to come and stay nearby, in Tirunāvāy, in all His heavenly splendour.

vaṇṇam maṇi māṭa nal nāvāy uḷḷāṇait
tiṇṇam matiḷ teṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
paṇ ār tamiḷ āyirattu ip pattum vallār
maṇ āṇṭu maṇam kamaḻvar mallikaiyē. (IX-8-11)

Translation

Those well-versed in these songs ten, out of the tuneful thousand,
Composed by Caṭakōpaṉ of Kurukūr, by stately walls bound,
Adoring the Lord in lovely Tirunāvāy, with castles fine,
Shall rule this Earth long and then Heaven attain,
Imbibing the fragrance sweet of the Lord Supreme.

Note

The chanters of this decad shall enjoy the best of both the worlds. The text of the song, as in the original, affirms that these persons will not only rule over this world for long but also acquire the fragrance of Jasmine which, in fact, stands for perfumes, in general. The Scriptural texts declare that the Lord is the embodiment of all kinds of fragrance and it would, therefore, follow that the chanters in question shall imbibe all that fragrance, staying in Heaven, in close proximity to the Lord.

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Ninth Centum—Ninth Decad (IX-9)
(Mallikai Kamal)

Preamble

Our great preceptors used to call this decad, as the ' Evening brawl ' and the third decad in the next (tenth) centum, as the ' Morning squabble '. In the latter decad, the Āḻvār enters the vein of the Gopīs, the damsels of Virundāvaṉ, who quarrelled with Kṛṣṇa early in the morning when he was about to take the cattle to the pastures for grazing, dissuading him from going to the outlying fields, in view of their inability to brook separation from him for a whole day, not to speak of the lurking danger from Kamsa's spies and evil agents. In this decad, the Āḻvār experiences the pangs of separation, undergone by the Gopīs during those evenings, when Kṛṣṇa was a little late in returning home after tending the grazing cattle, by day. On certain evenings, Kṛṣṇa would return at the head of the cattle, sounding the bugle, while, on other days, He would allow the cattle to go ahead and walk behind them. Well, during those evenings, when Kṛṣṇa did not make His appearance first but chose to walk behind the cattle, even that little prolongation of Kṛṣṇa's absence upset the Gopīs who suffered the anguish of an age. The Āḻvār is found in this decad, experiencing, singly, the pangs experienced by all of them in the above context.

It is evening when the cool southerly breeze wafts the sweet fragrance of the Jasmine, in full bloom and the lovely Moon is up in the Sky. Then there is the roaring of the sea, the tuneful cooing of the warbling birds, the distant sound of the bugle and a host of other things which make that part of the day highly delectable. But all these normal instruments of happiness affect the frustrated Āḻvār adversely, as he could not gain access to Tirunāvāy, much as he longed for. All these remind him of the Lord, making his separation from Him, all the more poignant. A striking parallel to this can be found in Sītā during her captivity in Laṅkā, surrounded by an uncouth band of Rākṣasīs, tormenting and torturing her. What was it she had longed for while following Lord Rāma into exile and what was it she got herself landed in? Well, She thought that she could have her Lord all unto herself, without the distractions of the Palace where he would have had to divide

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his time among so many parents, subjects, ministers and so on. But she found herself in the gruesome predicament of a captive on whom miseries of all kinds were unleashed by those unrelenting monsters, set upon her by Rāvaṇa, their king. She was even driven to the very edge of the extreme step of strangling herself with her long locks of hair.

Nampi Tiruvaraṅka Nārāyaṇa Tācar, a disciple of Nampiḷḷai attended the latter's discourses of Tiruvāymoḷi. One day, Tācar happened to meet Peṟṟi, a disciple of Naṅciyar, the preceptor of Nampiḷḷai. Asked about the particular decad, currently discoursed upon delightfully by Nampiḷḷai, Tācar told Peṟṟi, "Today, the learned lecturer completed the decad commencing with the words 'Arukkum viṉai' (IX-8), tomorrow we shall listen to the discourse on the next decad, known as the evening brawl."

When Emperumāṉār (Śrī Rāmānuja) was studying this decad under Tirumālai Āntāṉ, the latter said, Āḻavantār used to say that the Āḻvār suffered as much as all the cowherdesses of Virundāvan did suffer in one night, due to Lord Kṛṣṇa's desertion of them". "No", interrupted Emperumāṉār, "Sire, please say that he suffered all those pangs in the space of an evening, as a whole night is too long a period to keep him alive despite the pangs of separation from the Lord". Indeed, a moment's absence from God is an age of pangs to the love-lorn Saints; time seems stretched into an eternity and, during such moments, the very objects which cater to one's pleasures seem to be the instruments of torture, wantonly designed to aggravate their sufferings.

mallikai kamaḻ tenṟal īrum, ālō!
vaṉ kuṟiñci icai tavarum, ālō!
cel katir mālaiyum mayakkum, ālō!
cekkar nal mēkaṅkaḷ citaikkum, ālō!
alli am tāmaraik kaṇṇaṉ, emmāṉ,
āyaṟkaḷ ēṟu, ari-ēṟu, ēm māyōṉ
pulliya mulaikaḷum tōḷum koṇṭu,
pukaliṭam aṟikilam tamiyam, ālō! (IX-9-1)

Translation

Alas! the jasmine scent, the southerly breeze does waft,
Cuts me across like the unrelenting shaft;

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Ha! the tuneful singing of the birds does my ears pierce,
The evening Sun just sends me into a trance
While the pretty clouds, by the crimson sky lit, hack me to pieces;
Pity, I know not where I can resort
And survive the lingering memory of my Lord
Who did my breasts and shoulders in tight embrace hold,
The shepherd Chief, like unto a lion, with blooming lotus eyes.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār gets into the vein of a Gopī whose pangs of separation from Kṛṣṇa, particularly in view of his delayed home-coming, were aggravated by the cool evening breeze, the setting Sun, crescent sky etc., individually and collectively. What is normally soothing and pleasurable acquires a different complexion altogether and turns out to be a veritable instrument of torture to the lover in a state of desolation. There are quite a few Ślokas in the first Sarga of Kiṣkindā Kāṇḍam (Rāmāyaṇa), pitched in the same key as this decad.

(ii) The approach of night-fall only heightens the gloom, as even that little distraction of mind afforded by the sight of things around, by day, is no longer possible when one is locked up in darkness. The crescent sky and the clouds, seen in that setting, vividly remind the Nāyakī of the exquisite form of the Lord, limb by limb; what then are the chances of her survival through forgetting her erstwhile union with Him?

pukaḻiṭam aṟikilam tamiyam, āḻō!
pulampuṟu maṇi, teṉṟal āmpal, āḻō!
pakal aṭumālai, vaṇ cāntam, āḻō!
paṅcamam, mullai, taṇ vāṭai, āḻō!
akal iṭam paṭaittu, iṭantu, uṇṭu umiḻntu, aḻantu,
eṅkum aḻikkiṉṟa āyaṉmāyōṉ,
iṇaiyiṭattu acuraṟkaḷ kūṟṟam vārāṉ-iṉi iruntu,
eṉ uyirkāṯṯikum āṟu eṉ? (IX–9–2)

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Translation

Alas! where is the place I can, in seclusion, live?
The tinkling of the cattle bells, the sounding of the bugle
And the southerly breeze, that unto me blows, are oppressive;
The evening that marks the end of day, the sweet sandal,
The cooing of the birds, the jasmine scent and the cool breeze,
I can hardly tell how all these do my life squeeze;
How can I my life preserve when the wondrous cowherd turns not,
The Benefactor great, Who the worlds did ordain, ate and spat,
Deadly unto the fell Asuras on the battle-front?

Note

Well, all those things that regaled the Nâyakî when in the company of her Lord, now oppress her. The Lord, who extends protection to His subjects, in ever so many ways, having withdrawn Himself from Parâṅkuśa Nâyakî, she hardly knows how she can at all hold her life.

iṉi iruntu, eṉ uyir kākkum āṟu eṉ?
iṇai mulai namuka, nuṇ iṭai nuṭaṅka,
tuṉi irum kalaviceytu, ākam tōyntu,
tuṟaṇtu, emmai iṭṭu, akal kaṇṇaṉ, kaḷvaṉ,
taṉi iḷam ciṅkam, em māyaṉ vārāṉ;
tāmaraik kaṇṇum, cevvāyum, nilap
paṉi irum kuḻalkaḻum, nāṉku tōḷum
pāviyēṉ maṉattē niṉṟu iṟum, āḷō! (IX–9–3)

Translation

Is there at all any means for me to hold my life on?
My wondrous Lord Kaṇṇaṉ, the peerless cub, the thief, has gone,
Having with me mingled so well, in great grief did He land
Me with sagging breasts and waist overworked; this sinner's mind
Is haunted, alas! by His lotus eyes and coral lips,
Lovely locks, long and cool and shoulders four.

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Note

Apart from the physical objects around, such as the southerly breeze, fragrance of flowers etc., tormenting the Nāyaki, the Lord's exquisite Form also comes to her mind's eye, limb by limb, and oppresses her. Should He, who now keeps aloof, unmindful of her, have at all come and mingled with her and that too, in the manner He did? Poor Nāyaki, she cannot endure her separation from Him, through forgetting Him, because of His inseparable charm, haunting her mental vision all the time.

pāviyēṉ maṉattē niṉṟu Irum, ālō!
vāṭai-taṉ vāṭai vev vāṭaı, ālō!
mēvu taṉ matıyam vem matıyam, ālō!
meṉ malarp paḷḷi vem paḷḷi, āḷō!
tūvi am puḷ uṭaıt teyva vaṇṭu
tutainta em peṇmaı am pū ıtu, ālō!
āviyiṉ param alla vakaıkaḷ, ālō!
yāmuṭaı neñcamum tuṇaı aṉṟu, ālō! (IX–9–4)

Translation

Alas! the Lord's lingering Form does my mind haunt and split,
Ha! the cool southerly breeze does fire on me spit,
The gentle rays of the lovable Moon do heat emit,
What! the flower bed, soft and somnolent, has turned hot!
The flower of my feminity has been sucked and sapped
By the Divine Bee, the Lord Supreme Who is equipped
With Garuḍa, the hefty bird with plumes large as His vehicle,
Indeed, all these are hard to endure for my poor soul,
My mind too, my companion of yore, is now of no avail.

Note

It would be hardly appropriate for an young lady to give vent to expressions of this kind, openly complaining of her amorous lot. But then, the Nāyakī does not mince matters; she makes no secret of the fact that her feminity is no longer *intact*, having been thrown out of gear by her erstwhile union with the Lord. The Divine bee (Lord) has sucked the flower of her feminity and sapped it. Even the other

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alternative to external perception, namely, mental comprehension and rapport is not possible, the mind having also become defunct.

yāmuṭai neñcamum tuṇai aṉṟu, ālō!
ā puku mālaiyum ākiṉṟu, ālō!
yāmuṭai āyaṉ-taṉ maṉam kal, ālō!
avaṉuṭaiṭ tīm kuḻal irum, ālō!
yāmuṭait tuṇai eṉṉum tōḻimārum
emmil muṉ avaṉukku māyvar, ālō!
yāmuṭai ār uyir kākkumāṟu eṉ?–
avaṉuṭai aruḷpeṟum pōtu aritē! (IX–9–5)

Translation

Alas! my mind is unto me of no avail,
'Tis evening and the cows are due back home;
Should Gopāl's enchanting flute tempt my heart and steal
While His heart turns into a veritable stone?
Pity! ere me, my mates are in distress great
Weighed down by my sorry state;
How can I preserve my life dear
When His grace unto me is so dear?

Notes

(i) If, as the Nāyakī puts it, her beloved Lord has become stonyhearted, she could as well take due note of it and give up pining for Him. But she couldn't, having been attracted by the sweet strains from His magic flute, conveying, as it were, His pleadings. As Nampiḷḷai would have it, Kṛṣṇa, the Divine shepherd was trotting out excuses, such as, "I am sorry, I had to go after the cattle and even so, I am late in coming home; pity, I have been unavoidably detained and so on". All these were conveyed by Him through the flute, which naturally put the Nāyakī back into the picture.

(ii) The Nāyakī's frightful loneliness, making her despair of her survival, is vividly brought out in this song; her mind is of no avail and she lacks the soothing company

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of her mates who have broken down already, unable to witness her dire distress.

avaṉuṭai aruḷpeṟum pōtu aritāl;
av aruḷ allaṉa aruḷum alla;
avaṉ aruḷ peṟum aḷavu āvi nillātu;
aṭu pakal mālaiyum neñcum kāṇēṉ;
civaṉoṭu piramaṉ vaṇ tirumaṭantai
cēr tiru-ākam em āvi īrum;
evaṉ iṉip pukum iṭam? evaṉ ceykēṉō?
ārukku eṉ collukēṉ? aṉṉaimīrkāḷ! (IX–9–6)

Translation

His is indeed the only grace, Him to attain,
And yet, it is so dear; my life I can't hold on
Till I do His grace obtain, the evening is on,
Marking the day's end, pity, I am left alone,
My mind, my companion in solitude, I do miss,
My Lord holds Civaṉ, Piramaṉ and Tirumaṭantai, all at once,
On His lovely person and thus my soul enthrals;
Ye, elders, what shall I do, where do I shelter take
And to whom shall I my appeal make?

Note

"How is it", the Nāyaki revolves in her mind, "the Lord, Who was anxiously looking out, for some one to be the recipient of His grace, has made it scarce, in my case?" Well, cannot one look up to some one else, for such grace? No, there is no grace but His and yet, the Saint cannot patiently await its descent in due course; his yearning soul can hardly be sustained except by the rapid influx of the Lord's grace. "What a pity!", the saint vexes himself, "I can't have what these blokes, Kāpāli (Śiva, holding the skull in hand) and Kantar (Brahmā) could have easy access to", referring to the allotment of space on His very person by the Lord for them. While the Lord's navel is the seat of Brahmā, Tirumaṭantai (Lakṣmī) is inseparably poised on the Lord's winsome chest and Śiva takes shelter in the space allotted on the right side of the Lord's body, in times of grave emergency, as a measure of safety.

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ārukku eṉ colluṟēṉ? aṉṉaimīrkāḷ!
ār uyir aḷavu aṉṟu ik kūr taṉ vāṭai;
kār okkum mēṉi nam kaṇṇaṉ kaḷvaṉ
kavarnta at taṉi neñcam avaṉ kaṇaṟkē;
cīr uṟṟa akil-pukai, yāḻ naṟampu
pañcamam, taṉ pacum cāntu aṇaintu,
pōr uṟṟa vāṭai, taṉ mallikaippūp
putu maṇam mukantukoṇṭu, eṟiyum, āḷō! (IX–9–7)

Translation

Kaṇṇaṉ, my cloud-hued Lord did my mind steal
And in Him does it abide; the incense with fragrance filled,
The music of the lyre, the cooing of the Koel, the sandal cool,
The southerly breeze did all gather together and these are pitted
Against poor me, along with the fragrance of jasmine, in fresh bloom;
Ye, elders, unto whom shall I complain?
The biting blast does my soul torment.

Note

The elderly ladies around derive comfort from the very things which oppress the Nāyakī, as if they have all conspired together to torment her. How then can they feel her pulse and sympathise with her? Verily, they just cannot follow the language of the Saint, soaked in God-love.

putu maṇam mukantu koṇṭu eṟiyum, āḷō!
poṅku iḷa vāṭai; puṉ cekkar, āḷō!
atu maṇantu akaṉṟa nam kaṇṇaṉ kaḷvam
kaṇṇaṉil koṭitu; iṉi ataṉil umpar
matu maṇa mallikai mantak kōvai,
vaṉ pacum cāntiṉil-pañcamam vaittu-
atu maṇantu, iṉ aruḷ āycciyarkkē
ūṭum at tīm kuḻaṟkē uyyēṉ nāṉ. (IX–9–8)

Translation

The chill blast does pierce me with increasing intensity
And alas! it brings with it fragrance in its virginity,
The crescent sky does its quota of misery add,

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Even more cruel than Kaṇṇaṉ are His covert deeds,
The jasmine flowers, with honey and fragrance studded
Do waft their gentle smell, the sandal, cool and nice,
And the sweet amorous notes which Kaṇṇaṉ's flute plays
Unto the shepherd damsels, all these my life do flay.

Note

A series of things oppress the Nāyakī in her present state of desolation, as stated above. While the memory of her erstwhile union with the Lord haunts her and makes her feel that His deeds are even more cruel than Himself, the enchanting melody of His flute is the last straw to break her back. The last-mentioned alone is enough to take her life out.

ūṭum at tīm kuḻaṟkē uyyēṉ nāṉ;
atu moḻintu, iṭai iṭai, taṉ cey kōlat
tūtu cey kaṇkaḷ koṇṭu oṉṟu pēci,
tū moḻi icaikaḷ koṇṭu oṉṟu nōkki,
pēṭuṟu mukamceytu nontu nontu,
pētai neñcu aṟavu aṟap pāṭum pāṭṭai
yātum oṉṟu aṟikilam; amma! amma!
mālaiyum vantatu-māyaṉ vārāṉ. (IX–9–9)

Translation

I can't but succumb to the haunting melody of that pipe
That does His amorous advances convey, now and then;
His tell-tale eyes do His message speak with unique get-up,
His tuneful songs do glances throw and His deep concern
For girls with aching heart, His face reveals,
The songs He sings, anxious to put them at ease,
We hardly know; alas! evening has come
But the wondrous one is yet to come.

Note

It is the enchanting melody of Kṛṣṇa's flute, interspersed with significant statements, now and then, that disarms the Gopīs and makes them recile from the determined stand previously taken by them, not to mix with Him any longer. The

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Lord speaks through His eyes and sees through His tuneful songs. He is wondrous, in the sense, that even those, who were averse to Him, while in a state of desolation due to separation from Him, would feel remorseful for their erstwhile unrelenting attitude towards Him, when He eventually comes and mingles with them. So freely does He mingle with His devotees and, in the process, exhibit amazing simplicity.

mālaiyum varutatu; māyaṉ vārāṉ;
mā maṇi pulampa val ēṟu aṉainta
kōla nal nākukaḷ ukaḷum, ālō!
kotiyaṉa kuḷalkaḷum kulaṟum, ālō!
vāl oḷi vaḷar mullai, karumukaikaḷ,
mallikai alampi, vaṇṭu ālum, ālō!
velaiyum vicumpil viṇtu alaṟum, ālō!
eṉ collī uyvaṉ iṅku-avaṉai viṭṭē? (IX–9–10)

Translation

Ha! evening has arrived but not my Lord; the comely cows mingle
With the hefty bulls and their bells do tinkle,
Alas! the sweet music of the flute is tantalizing, the bees do gather
Honey from the white jasmine and many other flowers
And diving deep into them do hum, the roaring sea rends the air;
And now, how can I survive these that against me do conspire?

Note

Kṛṣṇa has not returned home at the appointed time; meanwhile quite a number of things oppress the Gopis to such an extent that their mere survival becomes a problem.

avaṉaiviṭṭu akaṉṟu, uyir āṟṟakillā
aṇi iḷai āycciyar mālaip pūcal
avaṉai viṭṭu akalvataṟkō iraṅki,
aṇi kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ, māṟaṉ,

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avaṉi uṇṭu umiḻntavaṉmēl uraitta
āyirattuḷ ivai pattum koṇṭu
avaṉiyuḷ alaṟṟi niṉṟu uymmiṉ toṇṭīr!
ac coṉṉa mālai naṇṇit toḻutē. (IX-9-11)

Translation

Ye, devout workers, chant with delight over here, these songs ten,
Out of the thousand composed, in sweet adoration
Of the Lord Who the worlds ate up and then spat, by Caṭa kōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr Who did separation from Him lament,
As did the bejewelled shepherdesses, one evening,
Unable to brook separation from Kaṇṇaṉ, and salvation attain,
Worshipping Tirumāl, [the Lord] mentioned therein

Note

This end-song reveals the benefit of chanting this decad, wherein the Āḻvār suffers the pangs of separation like unto those gone through by the Gopis (damsels of Virundāvan) at dusk, unable to put up with the delayed appearance of Kṛṣṇa. The chanters of this decad are assured of salvation, namely, eternal service at the feet of the Lord, without their suffering the pangs of separation from the Lord, as in the case of the Gopis and the Āḻvār.

Ninth Centum—Tenth Decad (IX-10)
(Mālai naṇṇi)

Preamble

In the eighth decad of this Centum, the Āḻvār exhibited his inordinate longing for communion with the Lord and his great grief, due to the non-realisation of the union longed for, found expression in the following decad. Seeing the Āḻvār, in such dire distress, the Lord spoke to him thus: "Well, your grief apart, mine is indeed greater than yours, inasmuch as I have not, as yet, got at you and the privation is mine; it is only for your sake that I have come down, all the way, from the High Heavens to the holy

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centre of Tirukkaṇṇapuram, near at hand. Surely, I will grant you your desire, at the end of the current span of life". Thus placated, the Āḻvār gives vent to his joy, in this decad. The fifth song of this decad is the topical one, stressing the fact that the Lord is the great Benefactor, the granter of Mokṣa (eternal emancipation) when the body falls off, at the end of the current span of life.

Once again, the Saint, with his characteristic compassion for the sorrowing mankind, sunk deep down the ocean of 'Samsāra', addresses them all. He preaches unto them, the path of loving surrender to the Lord who is easily accessible to one and all, at the holy Tirukkaṇṇapuram, bent upon retrieving the votaries. Even if they cannot perform the physical act of prostration at the feet of the Lord, with unflinching faith, surrender unto Him calls for, the mere mention of the name of that holy centre, Tirukkaṇṇapuram, will deliver the goods (vide tenth song of this decad).

mālai naṇṇit toḻutu eḻumiṉō, viṉai keṭa,
kālai mālai kamala malar iṭṭu, nīr—
vēlai mōtum matiḷ cūḻ tiruk kaṇṇapurattu
āḷiṉmēl āl amarntāṉ aṭi-iṇaikaḷē. (IX–10–1)

Translation

Get near the Māl [Lord] at Tirukkaṇṇapuram, surrounded by walls,
The oceanic waves dash against, the One that on a fig-leaf lay
On a sheet of water vast and worship, ye, men, one and all,
Placing lotus flowers at His lovely pair of feet, night and day
And salvation attain, purged of your sins, one and all.

Notes

(i) What the Āḻvār preaches, in this decad, is briefly mentioned here. There is indeed no restriction on the flowers with which the Lord is to be worshipped. No flower is taboo and, in the name of burning incense, as part of worship, even a heap of garbage could be burnt and smoke raised therefrom. The outward offerings may be trifles but, in God's eyes, they carry much weight when offered with humility and devotion.

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(ii) The sea seems to have receded from the township since; it might have been right on the sea-shore, with the billows breaking against the temple walls, during the days of the Āḻvār.

kaḷ aviḻum malar iṭṭu, r̥ r̥r iṟaiñcumiṉ—
naḻḻi cērum vayal cūḻ kiṭaṅkiṉ puṭai
veḻḻi ēynta matiḷ cūḻ tirukkaṇṇapuram
uḻḻi, nāḷum toḻutu eḻumiṉō, toṇṭarē! (IX–10–2)

Translation

Ye, devout men, worship the Lord with flowers fine, studded, with honey,
And salvation do attain, lovingly meditating on Tirukkaṇṇapuram daily,
The holy place enclosed by stately walls reaching the very sky,
Whose moats the fields adjoin where female crabs go gay.

Notes

(i) That there is no restriction on the flowers to be used for worshipping the Lord is brought out by reference, in this song, to honey-studded flowers, in general, and not merely the lotus, as mentioned in the preceding song. All that is needed is that the flowers should be fresh and not dried up. These flowers are only symbolic of the eight varieties of flowers to be employed by the votaries for worship, namely, '*Ahimsā*' (non-violence), '*Indṛya nigrahaḥ*' (control over the sensory organs), '*Sarva bhūta dayā*' (compassion for one and all), '*Kṣamā*' (forgiveness) '*Dhyānam*' (Meditation), '*Tapaḥ* (penance or austerity), '*Jnānam*' (knowledge) and '*Satyam*' (Truth or veracity). This is brought out, in the following śloka:

"*Ahimsā* puṣpam pratamaṁ puṣpaṁ, puṣpaṁ *Indṛya nigrahaḥ*, *Sarvabhūtadayā* puṣpaṁ, *Kṣamā* puṣpaṁ viśeṣataḥ, *Dhyānam* puṣpaṁ, *tapaḥ* puṣpaṁ, *Jnānam* puṣpaṁ tataivaca, *Satyam* aṣṭavidam puṣpaṁ Viṣnoḥ prītikaraṁ bhaveth".

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(ii) Even loving meditation of this holy centre will secure one's salvation. This could be done all the time, without restriction, unlike the dip in the oceanic waters, which is permissible only on certain specified days.

toṇṭar! num tam tuyar pōka, nīr ēkamāy,
viṇṭu vāṭā malar iṭṭu, nīr iṟaiñcumiṉ—
vaṇṭu pātum poḻil cūḻ tirukkaṇṇapurattu
aṇṭa vāṇaṉ, amarar perumāṉaiyē. (IX–10–3)

Translation

Ye, devout men, worship with devotion supreme
And offer flowers in fresh bloom
Unto the Sovereign Master of the Universe, Who dwells
In Tirukkaṇṇapuram amid orchards where humming bees revel
And thus all your ills and evils dispel.

Notes

(i) The highest love to God is love rendered with no personal end in view but culminating in benediction or glorification of God. Love, so disinterestedly rendered, is love of purity and virginity, which carries with it the highest reward, namely, possession of God Himself. It is this kind of loving worship that the Āḻvār is preaching to the world around, now addressed by him with his characteristic solicitude and tenderness of heart.

(ii) The bees allude to the knowledgeable savants, with a keen sense of discrimination, capable of picking up the essentials (honey) and discarding the otherwise.

(iii) The Sovereign Master of the Universe, the overlord of the Celestials has condescended to come down to our midst, taking up abode in Tirukkaṇṇapuram where His dispensation operates both ways. The Lord not only dispels our age-long sins but also confers on us heavenly bliss, right here, in His immediate presence. Unlike the infirmary for the blind, where the sighted do not have to go for treatment, even the Celestials, well beyond the mischief of dark nescience, have to come

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to this dark land, to taste the Lord's amazing simplicity (Saulabhya) which is far more pronounced here than in heaven.

māṉai nōkki maṭap piṉṉai-taṉ kēḷvaṉai,
tēṉai, vāṭā malar iṭṭu, nīr iṟaiñcumin;
vāṉai untum matiḷ cūḻ tirukkaṇṇapuram
tāṉ nayanta perumāṉ caraṇ ākumē. (IX–10–4)

Translation

Worship our sire with choice flowers, in fresh bloom,
The doe-eyed Piṉṉai's Spouse, sweet as honey;
The Lord that lovingly stays in Tirukkaṇṇapuram,
Whose walls rise up to the sky, is indeed our haven.

Notes

(i) The doe-eyed Consort of the Lord is the unfailing intercessor between man and God and the Āḻvār is, therefore, sure of the salvation of his addressee (the worldlings) whom he advises to approach the Lord through the good offices of the Divine Mother.

(ii) The Āḻvār has indeed to deal with a cross-section of humanity, with varying degrees of spiritual calibre and equipment. He would not, therefore, leave out of his purview those who have not, as yet, developed that robust faith in the Lord, which makes them look upon Him as the Ready Means (siddhopāya), the Means and the End, rolled into one. For the lesser grades of mankind, he preaches the form of worship involving the use of materials, such as flowers, fresh and fine, honey etc., the 'Sāṅga Bhakti', as it is called, vide aphorism 227 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayam'.

caraṇam ākum taṉa tāḷ aṭaintārkku eḷḷām;
maraṇam āṉāl vaikuntam koṭukkum pirāṉ,
araṇ amainta matiḷ cūḻ tirukkaṇṇapurat
taraṇiyāḷaṉ, taṉatu aṉparkku aṉpu ākumē. (IX–10–5)

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Translation

Unto those that seek refuge at His feet
He is the perfect Protector indeed;
Unto those that love Him with all their heart
The Sovereign Lord is all love; the Ruler great
Of Tirukkaṇṇapuram, enclosed by walls, safe and secure,
Is the Benefactor great that heavenly bliss does dower
At the fall of this material body, the outer cover.

Note

As already stated in the preamble to this decad, this is the topical song of this decad. The Lord, enshrined at Tirukkaṇṇapuram, vouchsafes heavenly bliss, at the end of the current span of life, unto those that seek refuge at His lovely pair of feet. This is the unfailing path of loving surrender at the Lord's pair of feet, as the Sole means of salvation, which is open to one and all, unlike the discipline of 'Bhakti yoga' indicated in the three preceding stanzas, restricted to certain categories of persons. The Lord having assured the Āḻvār that he would be granted entry into the High Heavens as soon as his body falls off, the Āḻvār complacently styles the Lord as the "Granter of Heaven, at one's death".

aṉpaṉ ākum, taṉa tāḷ aṭaintārkku ellām;
cem poṉ ākattu avuṇaṉ uṭal kīṇṭavaṉ,
naṉ poṉ ēynta matiḷ cūḻ tirukkaṇṇapurattu
aṉpaṉ, nāḻum taṉa meyyarkku meyyaṉē. (IX–10–6)

Translation

Love He bears unto those that seek refuge at His feet,
The body of Avuṇaṉ, of the hue of red gold, He split,
Our Lord, Who loves to stay in Tirukkaṇṇapuram,
Whose boundary walls, set with pure gold, do gleam,
Truly loves those that bear true love unto Him.

Notes

(i) Whosoever takes refuge at the Lord's feet is tended by Him with the same loving care, without distinction of high and low.

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(ii) It was young Prahlādā's great devotion unto the Lord, that made Him shed His enormous grace on him, despite his belonging to the Rākṣasa clan, and slay his dastardly sire, Avuṇan (Hiraṇya). The Lord loves His devotees even more dearly than they love Him and He has lovingly chosen Tirukkaṇṇapuram, as His abode, wherein He exhibits this great trait. The Āḻvār, therefore, calls upon people to worship Him at this holy centre, with unflinching devotion, devoid of selfish ends.

meyyaṉ ākum, virumpit toḻuvārkku ellām;
poyyaṉ ākum, puṟamē toḻuvārkku ellām;
ceyyil vāḻai ukaḻum tirukkaṇṇapurattu
aiyaṉ ākattu aṇaippārkaṭku aṇiyaṉē. (IX–10–7)

Translation

All His glory and splendour He does reveal
Unto those that seek Him as the Be-all and End-all;
On the other hand, His true nature He does conceal
From them that worship Him for achieving their personal needs;
Our Sire at Tirukkaṇṇapuram, in whose fertile fields
The fishes play about, is very close indeed
To those that keep Him in their hearts imbedded.

Note

The Lord stays in His worshippable from at Tirukkaṇṇapuram, revealing Himself fully, unto those that love Him disinterestedly, as an end in itself, and concealing His true nature from those who seek petty, personal favours from Him and formally propitiate Him to secure their personal ends, devoid of true love unto Him.

aṇiyaṉ ākum, taṉa tāḻ aṭaintārkku ellām;
piṉiyum cārā; piṟavi keṭuttu āḻum;
maṉi poṉ ēynta matiḻ cūḻ tirukkaṇṇapuram-
paṇimiṉ ṇāḻum-paramēṭṭi-taṉ pātamē. (IX–10–8)

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Translation

May You for ever adore the lovely feet of the Supreme Lord
At holy Tirukkaṇṇapuram, enclosed by walls, with gold and ruby laid,
Him that is near at hand to those that lovingly worship
His pair of feet and thus the dreadful cycle of birth escape,
Rid of all ills and evils that dare not clasp you any more.

Note

The loving worship, referred to here, is the disinterested love of God, with no personal ends in view, which culminates in the highest reward, namely, possession of God Himself. Unto such votaries, the Lord is ever close and easily accessible and the natural corollary to this state is the riddance of their ills and evils, one and all, including the dreadful cycle of birth and death. Tirukkaṇṇapuram, the holy centre on Earth, looms like a Heavenly spot, set with gold, gems and rubies, in the eyes of the Saint.

pātam nāḷum paṇiya, taṇiyum piṇi;
ētam cārā; eṉakkēl iṉi eṉkuṟai?
vēta nāvar virumpum tirukkaṇṇapurattu
ātiyāṉai aṭaintārkku allal illaiyē. (IX–10–9)

Translation

Sorrow there's none unto those that adore
The Primate, the Lord Supreme Who dwells
At Tirukkaṇṇapuram, the Vedic Scholars' favourite abode;
My mind with love unto Him does always swell,
Him that does His feet for ever truly worship,
Ills and evils shall no longer clasp;
Is there now indeed anything I lack?

Note

The Saint preaches unto the world, voicing forth his own experience which they can very well share, if only they would adore, likewise, the feet of the Supreme Lord. The age-long accumulation of sins has been wiped off, in full, and the

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dreadful contingency of sins accruing hereafter has also been ruled out. If this is the case with the Āḻvār, there's no reason why others should not achieve what he did, if only they would likewise pin all their faith in the Supreme Lord, the first and foremost, and lovingly adore His feet. Is there indeed any care or anxiety for the young one that reposes on the complacent lap of the Mother?

illai allal; eṉakkēl iṉi eṉ kuṟai?
alli mātar amarum tirumārpiṉaṉ
kallil ēynta matiḷ cūḻ tirukkaṇṇapuram
colla, nāḻum tuyar pāṭu cārāvē. (IX–10–10)

Translation

All my miseries have gone and wants have I none,
Sorrows are at a distance kept, at the mere mention
Of the name of holy Tirukkaṇṇapuram, which stone walls enclose,
Where resides the Lord on whose winsome chest does repose
Tiru (Lakṣmī), His lotus-born spouse.

Note

The Āḻvār disclosed in the preceding song that he enjoys absolute freedom from miseries and that there is hardly any felicity that he lacks. He now says that this blissful state can be attained even by those who are incapable of pursuing the hard line of Bhakti or the path of loving surrender to His sweet grace (Prapatti), by merely mentioning the name of the holy centre, known as Tirukkaṇṇapuram. There dwells the Lord on whose winsome chest always stays the inseparable Divine Mother, the unfailing Mediatrix, the great intercessor between God and man, the very personification of grace, ever ready to wink at our countless transgressions.

pāṭu cārāviṉai paṟṟu aṟa veṇṭuvīr!
māṭamāḷiṭu kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ col
pāṭalāṉa tamiḷ āyirattuḷ ippattum
pāṭi āṭi paṇimiṉ avaṉ tāḷkaḷē (IX–10–11)

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Translation

Those of You that wish to banish effectively your age-long sins,
Will do well to dance, singing lustily these songs ten,
Out of the thousand choice Tamil Songs composed by Caṭakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, with castles tall, and the Lord's holy feet attain.

Notes

(i) Even the end-song partakes of the character of the other songs, in this decad, couched, as it is, in the form of an address (advice) to the men around. It can also be interpreted as conveying the benefit accruing by dint of singing these ten songs, namely, attainment of the Lord's blissful feet. Those who sing, tunefully and with ecstatic devotion, these ten songs in adoration of Lord Śourirājaṉ, enshrined in Tirukkaṇṇapuram, will have their sins eradicated, root and branch and attain His glorious feet. These mellifluous songs, like unto fragrant flowers, are so sweet that they hold out an irresistible fascination even to the non-zealous and unfriendly ones, if they did but once recite them.

(ii) It was the super-abundant grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, that impelled Him to restate through His Song Celestial, the central teachings of the Upaniṣads, for the benefit of the different grades of mankind in varying stages of evolution. Even so, Saint Nammāḻvār, well on the verge of entry into the destined land, the Heaven, would not rest on his oars but address the worldlings, out of deep compassion, with an eye on the spiritual uplift of one and all. He has indeed a recipe to suit every taste, seeing that men's tastes differ according to their calibre and equipment—vide aphorism 227 of Ācārya Hṛdayam.

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THE CENTUM, IN RETROSPECT
(DECAD-WISE SUMMARY)

(IX-1) : Love unto the Godly men, dwelt upon, in the concluding decad of the eighth Centum, is automatically carried over to all those closely associated with them and the love so generated reverts to the Lord, as the One loved and revered by the devotees. And so, the Āḻvār illustrates copiously and in a telling manner, *in the opening decad of this centum*, the utter futility of our hanging on to the earthly relations and all else except the Supreme Lord Who alone is our Eternal Saviour and Sole Sustainer under all circumstances. The miserable hollowness of the ephemeral bonds of the earthly relations and associates, the veritable parasites, is exposed by the Āḻvār in all its nakedness. This decad is said to be in benedictive adoration of Mathurā, in Uttara Pradesh, in view of the frequent references to that holy centre, hallowed by its association with Vāmana and Kṛṣṇa; it was also the capital of the kingdom, ruled by Śatrugna, Lord Rāma's youngest brother;

(IX-2) : With the awareness that the Lord stays in His worshippable (Iconic) Form in Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi in order to extend to His votaries all the benefits which they could expect from their earthly relations, the Āḻvār now proceeds (mentally of course) to that holy centre, eager to become the recipient of the Lord's love and attention. But then, the Lord remained unresponsive and yet, it did not detract from the Āḻvār's immense faith in Him, as his all. What agitated the Āḻvār's mind was the manner in which the Lord was reclining in the holy centre without changing sides, even once, by way of adjustment. Closetted with the Lord, in the shrine, the Āḻvār pleads with Him privately, *in the second decad*, that He should deign to move about, come forward a few paces, in the company of His Divine Consorts, greet him with His bewitching smiles and so on ;

> [Meaning apart, the diction of this decad (original text) is such as to melt even stony hearts. Those of us, who get caught up in the bewildering complexities of life, will do well to chant this decad and feel relieved and refreshed. How soothing are these verses indeed!]

(IX-3) : In the second decad, the Āḻvār fervently prayed that the Lord be pleased to turn His sweet glances on him, grant audience to him and the denizens of all the three worlds, remaining in a seated posture, beckon him or come down to him and permit him to stroke His lovely pair of feet and so on. The Lord, however, focussed his attention on the fundamental relationship that subsists between them, which hardly affords any scope for such entreaties by him and much less, for the grief that results from the Lord's apparent non-compliance. The basic fact of the Lord being Nārāyaṇā, in whom all things and beings inhere and who abides in all, reduces all things and beings to the abject position of mere bodies unto the Life within, dominating, directing and supporting them. Consoled thus by the Lord, in quite a convincing manner, the Saint regains his composure and gives vent, *in the third decad*, to his rapturous admiration of Lord Nārāyana, as our Sole Benefactor, His great concern for His subjects and loving condescension;

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(IX-4) : Keen to maintain His reputation as the repository of the auspicious qualities of tender solicitude, etc., denoted by His name, Nārāyaṇā, (which come to the fore through the irresistible spell cast on Him by Goddess Mahā-lakṣmī) the Lord presented Himself to the Āḻvār. Overjoyed by the Lord's presence (mental vision), the Āḻvār gives vent, *in the fourth decad*, to his gratitude for the Lord having pressed him into service and got these hymns sung by him, for the edification of the pious. "What a bliss and that too, bestowed on a single individual!" is how the Āḻvār revolves in his mind ;

(IX-5) : In the eighth song of the fourth decad, the Āḻvār referred to his having got the vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa, a by-gone Avatāra. This led him to the desire for external perception of the Lord as well, without being confined to a mere mental vision. It did not, however, materialise; worn out by dejection, due to this apparent desertion by the Lord, the Āḻvār tried to divert his mind by seeking the fellowship of things around, bearing the Lord's likeness. But the very things, chosen for diversion, served only as incentives to remind the Āḻvār, all the more, about the Lord and thus torment him. We see the Āḻvār, *in the fifth decad*, in the plight of a female-lover, separated from the Lord after their erstwhile union, trying to sustain herself in the sweet environments of a lovely garden. But there, the warbling koel and the blue peacock remind the forlorn lover of the Lord's sweet accents and charming complexion and she at once concludes that the Lord has set these creatures on her, just to make her collapse, pining for Him. She, therefore, asks them why they are at such great pains to put an end to her life which she would as well part with, at her own volition. Even so, the Nāyaki manages to pull through, recounting, in this decad, the Lord's auspicious traits;

(IX-6) : It was only the absorbing recollection of the immensity of the Lord's love, during their erstwhile union, experienced in the seventh decad of the eighth centum, that warmed up the Āḻvār. *In the sixth decad of this Centum*, the Āḻvār lauds the glory and greatness of the Deity enshrined in the pilgrim centre, called Tirukkāṭkarai (Kerala State), who kindled, in the Āḻvār, this kind of reminiscence and made him revert to the exhilarating mental state, as in VIII-7 ;

(IX-7) : While in a reminiscent mood, as in the sixth decad, the Āḻvār developed once more a deep yearning for direct perception of the Lord. This led him on to send emissaries, *in the seventh decad*, to the Lord in His Iconic Form at Tirumūḻikkaḷam (Kerala State), the accent resting on His enchanting beauty. Put briefly, the message, to be conveyed by the birds to the Lord, is:

> "Oh, Sire, enshrined as you are, in Tirumūḻikkaḷam, You seem to have got completely absorbed in the company of your Consorts and proximate attendants, to the exclusion of poor Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki. Alas! the Nāyaki, enthralled by your exquisite beauty, can hardly brook separation from you, any longer. Please take note of this fact and do hasten to her".

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[*Note* : This is the last of the four decads in which messages were despatched to the Lord at different destinations, by the Alvar, figuratively transformed as a forlorn female lover, *the other three* being I-4, VI-1 and VI-8].

(IX-8) : The Āḻvār could hardly contain the effervescence of God-love in him and patiently await the return of the emissaries sent by him to the Lord, in the seventh decad. And so, he tried to sustain himself by meeting the Lord, enshrined in Tirunāvāy (Kerala State). But, in his present state of desolation and debility, he could not make the trip to that pilgrim centre. The next best he could do, under the circumstances, was to meditate on the Lord at Tirunāvāy, right from where he was. This is precisely what he does *in the eighth decad;*

(IX-9) : It is evening when the cool, southerly breeze wafts the sweet fragrance of the jasmine, in full bloom and the lovely Moon is up in the sky. And then, there is the roaring of the sea, the tuneful cooing of the warbling birds, the distant sound of the bugle and a host of other things, which make that part of the day highly delectable. But all these normal instruments of happiness affect the frustrated Āḻvār adversely, as he could not gain access to Tirunāvāy, much as he longed for. And so, *in the ninth decad*, the Āḻvār experiences the pangs of separation, undergone by the Gopīs (Shepherd damsels), during those evenings, when Kṛṣṇa was a little late in returning home after tending the grazing cattle, by day. On certain evenings, Kṛṣṇa would return at the head of the cattle, sounding the bugle, while, on other days, he would allow the cattle to go ahead and then walk behind them. Even that little prolongation of Kṛṣṇa's absence, in the latter case, upset the Gopīs who suffered the anguish of an age. The Āḻvār is found, in this decad,experiencing singly all those pangs of Gopīs in the above context;

(IX-10) : Seeing the Āḻvār in dire distress, the Lord placated him by saying that He has come all the way from Heaven to near-by Tirukkaṇṇapuram only for his sake and that He will surely accomplish his desire, at the end of his current span of life. Thus placated, the Āḻvār gives vent to his joy, *in the concluding decad of this centum.* With his characteristic compassion for the sorrowing mankind, sunk deep in the ocean of Saṃsāra, he preaches unto them the path of loving surrender to the Lord who is easily accessible to one and all at the holy Tirukkaṇṇapuram, bent upon retrieving the votaries and assures them that even the mere mention of the name of that holy centre shall rid them of all, their sins and miseries.

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